

IT TAKES THREE
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THE FAMILY

In the beginning, God created
the heaven and earth and all therein.

In the image of God, created He man,
to help fulfil His wonderful plan,

Of bringing forth life,
in a Family clan.

THE FATHER,
THE MOTHER,
THE CHILDREN
were there,
When the Lord created the garden so fair.

His plan was then, and always will be,
for the Family to live in unity.

AND IN LOVE,
AND IN JOY,
AND IN PEACE,
AND HAPPINESS.

by Dru

IT TAKES THREE

FOREWORD

Lord, we need to understand and realize that there is a demand made upon us in our marriages, in the way that we live and conduct ourselves with one another, that reflects and brings glory or dishonor to You. We are asking that You will teach us and bring us into greater understanding. In Jesus' name, Amen!

I want you to understand that every promise in the Word of God that relates to the body of Christ, will work in your marriage. A husband might say, "I can't love my wife," and that is really foolish, because the Bible says, "love one another, even and I have loved you." That does not stop at the body of Christ or loving other people; that means we are to love our spouse just like Christ loves us. I want to show you what the enemy is trying to steal from the church, because if he can rob from your marriage, he is trying to make you a defeated Christian, really useless in the body of Christ. Let's look at Matthew 18:19-20:

(Mat 18:19 KJV) Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.

(Mat 18:20 KJV) For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

"Again I say unto you, that if any two of you shall agree..." Notice, any two of you. What quicker place to agree than in our homes. What quicker place to come into agreement than in a marriage. There are two of us in a marriage that need to be able to walk in agreement, so when the enemy can set a husband at odds with his wife, or a wife at odds with her husband, he destroys the power of agreement.

This is a divine principle that Christ taught and wants us to enact into our marriages. We do not have to be with three or four hundred brothers or sisters to have the power of agreement. All we need is to walk in one accord with our wife or with our husband, and then wherever we are agreed and come together in the name of the Lord, He is there, isn't He. He is there in the midst of that marriage to do whatsoever we ask, if we ask in agreement and according to His Word.

You see, man and woman were created equal in the garden. God created them and He made man and then He made woman, and He made them in His own image. The loss came when Satan entered in, deceived Eve and man and woman fell. She became then what is known as the weaker vessel. But in Christ, there is neither male nor female; we are all one in Him. So we know then that the marriage pertains to the flesh. It has nothing to do with your spirit-man, but if you have a right spirit, you are going to have a right marriage. Your marriage is flesh, and it is supposed to be a

joyful trip, isn't it. We are heirs together of the grace of life, not the grace of the kingdom of God, but the grace of life. Your marriage will end at the grave.

We see then that there was a fall that happened when sin entered into marriage, and began to defile the very thing that God had joined together. It defiled the very thing that God created to rule over the universe, to rule over this world, but God had a plan. God said because the woman was deceived, she needed a head, so God gave man to be the head of woman. When they walk in unity, they do not walk only as flesh; they walk together in the power of the Holy Spirit of God. That is why the enemy fights your marriage. He can't destroy your marriage. You do that for yourself, by taking and not applying the principles of God, but rather applying the principles of your feelings and your emotions.

We need commitment. I don't care how many times you have been married up to now, this is where it stops! This is where we begin to build; this is where commitment comes in. I don't care how many wrecks you've had in a car, you determine you are not going to have any more wrecks and you drive more careful. In this study we are going to start off brand new like you never were married. I want you to open your heart to that thought. I want you to open your heart and say, "Lord, I want to learn something." There is no use having any kind of teaching from the Word of God if we figure we already know it. We need to understand what God is saying.

This study is designed to give you scriptural evidence as to the will of God in the marriage relationship, and as Christians that ought to be what we base everything on. Not on theory, not on emotion, not on doctrine of men, because usually what happens if you feel bad about your marriage and you want to get out of it, you ask enough people and you'll finally find somebody to agree with you. They will condone what you want to get out of, but remember, your marriage is based on scriptural teachings.

The Lord has given us all power over the power of the enemy (Luke 10:19), so he cannot destroy marriage without our cooperation. Husbands may be blaming the devil or their wife and the wife may be blaming her husband or the devil. If you are a Christian, you need to understand what God's command is and what God's scriptural evidence is for your marriage. Too many people run into a commitment and say, "I do, I do," and about three weeks down the line they say, "I wish I hadn't." Then pretty soon they say, "I don't."

You don't change your mind with God. When you made that vow, God heard it and God took you at your word. God hears your vows. The writer of Ecclesiastes, who identifies himself only as the son of David (vs.1) said:

(Eccl 5:4 KJV) When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed.

(Eccl 5:5 KJV) Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay.

(Eccl 5:6 KJV) Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands?

He said you caused your flesh to sin. So when you made those marriage vows, God took your word for it. The devil cannot tear your marriage up; he has to have your cooperation.

If the body of Christ will obey the Word of God as it is written in the Bible, and as it is taught by the Holy Spirit in this study, healing and restoration will take place and the church will become that glorious church that our Lord so desires (Eph 5:27). When people look at a man and his wife, they are supposed to see Christ and His bride. Would you like Christ to talk about you with the words that you say about the one that you are married to? What I am going to teach you is hard, but it is in love. It is what the Holy Spirit wants to teach you.

Do you think your marriage could be improved? I like mine to be improved day by day from glory to glory. We are going to find out how it happens.

Rev 2:11 says, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches."

Is your marriage a part of the church? Is your union in Christ a part of the church? Yes! Then the Holy Spirit has something to say to you about your marriage.

1 Peter 3:7 says, "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered."

Amp. Bible says: *"In the same way you married men shall live considerately with your wives, with an intelligent recognition of the marriage relation, honoring the woman as physically the weaker, but realizing that you are joint heirs of the grace (God's unmerited favor) of life, in order that your prayers may not be hindered and cut off. Otherwise you cannot pray effectively."*

That is going to be the scripture that will underlie the whole study for us from this point on. Praise God!

IT TAKES THREE

GOD'S PLAN

Chapter 1

The name of this study "It Takes Three," is based on the following scripture:

Ecclesiastes 4:12 says, "...A three fold cord is not quickly broken."

When we really bring Christ into our marriage, and we become consciously aware that Christ is the third part of that marriage, we are not going to be so quick to become angry with one another. We will realize the way we are treating our spouse is exactly the way we are treating Christ. He is the third member in that threefold cord.

Genesis 1:26-27: "And God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created he him: male and female created He them."

God created them to work together, but sin entered in, and the female became the weaker vessel. For God to bring a pattern of what He really wanted, He put man together with woman and made a marriage so it would reflect Christ in the church.

Genesis 1:28: "And God blessed them, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth."

Amp. Bible says: "And God blessed them, and said to them, Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it with all its vast resources; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and over every living creature that moves upon the earth."

Fruitful = Conc. 6509 = to bear fruit (lit. or fig.):--bear, bring forth (fruit), (be, cause to be, make) fruitful, grow, increase.

CAUSE TO BE. Our marriages should be a place where we are causing joy to be, peace to be, the dominion of Christ to be in our lives. Right now I am not talking about just having children. I am talking about having something reproduced in your life that is way beyond your ability: a thing called PEACE. Don't you really desire total peace in your marriage. When you have arguments and the strife and all the bad things that happen, you are not being fruitful. Matt 7:20 says: "And by their fruits you shall know them."

Look at Galatians 5:22-25 in the Amplified Bible:

Vs.22 But the fruit of the Holy Spirit, (the work which His presence within accomplishes), is love, joy (gladness), peace, patience (an even temper, forbearance), kindness, goodness (benevolence), faithfulness, Vs.23 meekness, humility, gentleness, self-control (self-restraint, continence): Against such there is no law (that can bring a charge).

Vs.24 And those who belong to Christ Jesus, the Messiah, have crucified the flesh (the Godless human nature) with its passions and appetites and desires.

Vs.25 If we live by the Holy Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. If by the Holy Spirit, we have our life in God, let us go forward walking in line, our conduct controlled by the Spirit.

We need the fruit of the Spirit in our marriage. We need the fruit of love in our marriage. We need a wonderful marriage with Jesus as that third person; that threefold cord.

We will study later that when He said to be fruitful, He was talking about having children like them, that would go out and take dominion. They would be taught and instructed, and they would have authority over all the kingdoms of this world; but sin entered in. Nevertheless God never stopped His commission. When God sets something into motion, that is the way He wants it to work.

We know He repented when He was going to destroy Israel, but I am not talking about that. I am talking about when God sets a principle into effect, He wants that principle to work in our life. If you don't have a marriage that is full of joy, and peace, and love, and righteousness, it is not a fruitful marriage. It is going to be full of something else because you are going to be producing some kind of fruit in your marriage. Haven't you been around marriages you'd rather not be around? The husband yells at the wife and the wife talks about how bad her husband is, and the first thing you want to do is run. Let's be honest. How many people do you think want to be around your marriage?

Multiply, = Conc. #7235 = to increase (in whatever respect)--[bring in] abundance (to be many or to be abundant).

Replenish = Conc. #4390 = to fill or be full.

God wants us to have an abundant life. What we as Christians need to do, is fill the earth with the glory of the knowledge of the Lord and it needs to start in your marriage. If you can't have it at home, you are not going to have it at church. You are still going home with that person you came with, or you are going home to that person you left at home. You see, we figure that a marriage does not have that much significance because the psychologist or the psychiatrist says if you don't like that one,

get another one. That's not God's plan. You are always trying to find the perfect one, but what we need to do is look at ourselves and see how perfect we are.

God wants you to subdue, to have conquest or victory. If you are going to subdue the enemy out there, you are going to have to subdue him in your marriage. There's no way that you can leave your home talking evil about your husband or your wife and go out and blab that all over the country and then try to get up and say, "In the name of Jesus, you devil, I come against you." It is not going to work. Your prayers are going to be hindered. So God wants us to subdue any evil working in our marriage first.

Subdue = Conc #3533 = to tread down, to conquer, subjugate, bring into bondage, force, keep under, subdue, bring into subjection.

Dominion = Conc. #7287 = to tread down, prevail against, reign, rule over.

There are many marriages today that are completely out of balance and they are trying to get somebody outside the marriage to maintain it, to rule it, to have dominion in it, and it won't work. Men have to take their rightful place and women have to take their rightful position. You have to take the authority God gave both of you and begin to bring that authority together in prayer and in love and say, "Wait a minute! Honey, there is an argument trying to build between us; let's take dominion over it right now. Let's take dominion over that argumentative tongue. Let's take dominion over the gossiping, backbiting spirit that tries to come into our home."

What we need is a marriage that is **ONE**. Marriage is not 50/50; it is **ONE BODY**, and sometimes one partner has to be 99% of the marriage. Then it turns right around. When you think you have been carrying the big load, you fall down, and the other mate gets in there and instead of throwing it away, picks you up. So marriage is not 50/50 because when you think like that, you go and do your 50%, and you think, "Well, I've done my part, but they're not doing their part."

Get out of that 50/50 thing. Marriage is **ONE**; that is all there is. It is not half of you as the husband or half of you as the wife; the husband and wife are become **ONE FLESH**, created to have dominion in their own marriage. Amen! If you don't have it in your own marriage, forget about trying to have it in a ministry somewhere. We need to tread down the enemy when he tries to raise his ugly head up. What quicker way than being able to reach over to your spouse and say, "Honey, let's not argue; let's pray about this thing, and let God speak to our hearts. We have an ear to hear what the Spirit can say to our church, and we are part of the church, honey. Let's get God's wisdom and guidance on this thing."

We need to do that, instead of getting puffed up and acting like it does not exist. That is pure stupidity. When there is a problem that arises in our home and we get puffed up and ignore it, and we go off and slam the door and act like it does not exist, it gets bigger and bigger and bigger and bigger. You are not ruling over it, and before long it will have dominion over you. You won't talk to your wife anymore; you

won't talk to your husband anymore. You forget that she is part of you, or he is part of you.

Look at these five things that God said should be done by them, and I believe should be done in all marriages. #1, it ought to be fruitful. #2, we ought to be multiplying. #3, we ought to be replenishing. #4, we ought to be subduing. #5, we ought to take dominion over those spirits that try to destroy our marriage.

Quit inviting everybody into your marriage. If you have a problem, the first thing you should do about it is tell your spouse and pray about it. Amen! We bring in Mom, we bring in Dad, we bring in uncle so-and-so, we bring in the neighbors. We line up everybody we can, and then we are so confused by all this advice. If we had gone to the Lord as we should have in the beginning, God could have taken care of it then. If you still feel you need counsel, seek out a godly man and woman whose marriage is working; whose life has been this five-fold work.

If I am going to find somebody to speak to me about my marriage, I want somebody that's got one that is working. I am going to find somebody who is on top of it. I would hate to sit in somebody's office and tell them I've got trouble in my marriage, and have them say, "Man, you think you've got trouble; you ought to see what I am in." Amen?

Let's look at God's plan in Genesis 2:18, Amplified Bible:

"Now the Lord God said, it is not good (sufficient, satisfactory) that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper meet (suitable, adapted, completing) for him."

Notice who said this. It was not Adam. It was not the bull out in the field, nor the alligator in the swamp, or the monkey swinging through the tree. God said it. God said, "Wait a minute; it is not good that man should be alone." Adam up to this point probably did not know he was alone. He was just happy-go-lucky. I mean, he's ruling the whole thing; he's calling all the shots and he's naming all the animals, but God said it is not good. This is not Don Krider's plan. THIS IS GOD'S PLAN. If you think that you can operate on your own when you are married, you are mistaken. That is what the enemy wants you to think. When you ignore that portion that God made to complete you in that marriage, you become incomplete.

Help meet = Conc #5828 from #5826 = to surround, protect or aide, to help, to succour.

A woman was not just there to be there, was she. She was made to complete Adam in the work that he was going to do. Men, if God has given you a wife, you have found a good thing and you have obtained favor in the sight of the Lord. The problem is a lot of men have found women and not wives. Instead of waiting on God for their mate, they picked the one they wanted; and they always picked like Samuel

picked - looks good, sounds good, and oh boy! Later on in life, we find out that most of those never worked because God did not build it.

God had a purpose for making man and women. The husband is to manage with economy, or he's to set the tone. He is the one that is to provide for his household. He is the one who is to set the limits on what's going on. Most women say, "Well, I've got the checkbook." I'm not talking about that. My wife writes the checks, because I used to be on the road all the time and she had to pay a bill. I had no problem with that, but before she takes me into debt, she has to get my approval. That is just pure sane reasoning. I would hate to come home and find a \$4,000.00 indebtedness.

"Oh, honey, I meant to tell you about that. While you were gone, I just thought I needed a little wardrobe." Right away we've got a problem developing here. The man and the woman need to sit down and go right to the basics, to the economy. Most of our problems stem from finances. We men need to realize we are responsible before God to be a good steward and to allow the wife her freedom, but also to make her realize by sharing with her honestly, that we only have so much money. We need to discuss finances together because we are ONE. If we are in debt, we are both in debt, not just one of us.

In this economy we have today, women when they become housewives are almost made fun of. They are made to feel like they are second-rate citizens. God said, "Wait a minute; they are in MY employment." When you become a wife, it does not mean you cease existing. When you become a husband, it does not mean you cease existing. It means you both have moved into a new relationship, and instead of being just me now, it is us together in this thing. I have to start thinking those terms, not me anymore, but us. God is saying that the wife, the helpmeet, has a humble employment, which means honest and clean. It means you are workers, doesn't it. In Genesis 2:24 in the Amplified Bible, it says:

"Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and shall become united and cleave to his wife and they shall become one flesh."

Underline it - ONE. Do you believe the word of God is true? Do you believe that the word of God has an answer for every situation in our lives? God has a guideline for our marriage if we let His guideline come into effect into our lives. Too many times we supersede God's plan for our lives, and because we did, it takes us a long time to get back to it. Nobody wants to admit that they ever made a mistake, but if we are honest, we know that every one of us makes mistakes. We first of all have to humble ourselves. If you want to be exalted in your marriage, humble yourselves.

(1 Pet 5:6 KJV) Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:

Next we need to obey Ephesians 5:31:

The Amplified Bible says: "For this reason, a man shall leave his father and his mother and shall be joined to his wife and the two shall become one flesh."

That is God's plan. That is what God said is going to happen if you are going to be successful. You leave your parents, and should be leaving everybody else out of your marriage. You leave them and you start cleaving together and you start building together, and if anybody comes in and tries to make light of your mate, walk away from them. You chose that person to live with. You chose that individual to marry. Don't let people come in and make light of your choice. If I made a bad choice, I can still work on making it good, but I am not going to tell you about it. Let's look at Gen 2:21-22:

(Gen 2:21 KJV) 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;

(Gen 2:22 KJV) And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.

Rib = Conc. 6763 = a rib (as curved), lit. (of the body) or fig. (of a door, i.e. leaf); hence a side, lit. (of a person) or fig. (of an object or the sky, i.e. quarter); arch. a (espec. floor or ceiling) timber or plank (single or collect., i.e. a flooring):--beem, board, chamber, corner, leaf, plank, rib, side.

The word rib is used of a side of a man, or inanimate thing such as a tabernacle, the altar side chamber cells, and the temple, and so forth. But only once does it ever appear in the Word of God translated into the word rib in the way it is used here in Genesis. Isn't that amazing. It must have been an important event. He did not use it any other place but here. God took that rib and out of that rib He created woman.

In the Living Bible in Genesis 2:23 when God brought her to Adam, Adam exclaimed, "This is it!" Isn't that great. I like that. "She is part of my own bone and flesh." I can't imagine Adam just saying, "Well, I guess this is it." There had never been a woman before. This is God's sinless creation right here. He brings this woman to Adam and I think Adam's eyes bugged out of his head! He had seen cows, and bulls, an boy alligators and girl alligators, and all the animals, but he had NEVER seen a woman! I think he shouted so loud the whole garden roared. "THIS IS IT!"

We do that when we start out in our married life, don't we; but as we go down the road, we say, "Oh, God, is this it?" Somehow we lose that original vision and where there is no vision, the people perish. Your marriage perishes when there is no vision of remembering how you felt the first time you saw that beautiful wife that God prepared for you.

God wants us to enjoy marriage. One day the word "marriage" just popped into my mind. I saw it spelled out, M-A-R-R-I-A-G-E, and God separated that word. He made two words out of it and it was "marri-age." The Holy Spirit began to talk to me and He said, "That is what the age of marriage should be all about, being merry. It should be a continual feast. It should be a merry-age from the time of its' conception to the end of it." It should be a time filled with the joy of our heart, with a gladness of our spirit. We should be able to look at that husband or wife and say, "You're the one that makes my heart merry." So it is a "merry-age," isn't it.

"This is it!" The Revised Standard says: "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh." The New American Bible says: "This one at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh." The Good News Bible says:, "Then the man said, at last here is one of my own kind. Bone taken from my bone and flesh from my flesh." The Amplified Bible said, "This creature is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh."

The Living Bible is the one that grips me. "THIS IS IT!" If you'd practice that a little bit, it wouldn't be near that hard to say. But what we do is look at the woman, and we find that it is getting a little larger than when we first married it. Wrinkles are coming into it, the hair is growing gray, and we say, "My goodness, this is it? What happened to the girl I married?" Wrong thoughts. When you get tempted to do that, look into the mirror real quick and say, "What happened to him?"

From the day we said, "I do" until the day we leave this earth, we should be saying, "THIS IS IT!" We should pray with all of our heart that will be the attitude of our life. Amen! "THIS IS IT!" Guys, when you get up in the morning, I want you to jump out of bed and say, "THIS IS IT!" Your wife will probably tear the covers off running for shelter. We've become so dismal or cheerless about being married that the "merry-age" is no longer there. It is just an age. We will endure it to the end, you know. That is not what God wants. God wants a "merry-age"; a marriage-time of rejoicing in what God is doing. Amen!

THE DUTIES OF MAN

Chapter 2

(Gen 2:23 KJV) 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.

(Gen 2:24 KJV) Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

God gave me a thought of these two words - "leave" and "cleave." Leave everybody else out of your marriage, but cleave to your wife, fellows. Cleave to your wife. Continue to underline that word "ONE." He doesn't say there are going to be two. He said there is going to be one. Amen! When you marry, you become a part of one another. You don't become just two people living in one house. You have one heart, you have one mind, working together. The Bible tells us that all the members of the body should have the same mind (1 Cor. 1:10).

How about a marriage? They should have the same mind. It should be of one mind. We should have the same heart. We should have a heart for one another, but if we don't have a heart after God, we are not going to have a heart for one another. If we don't have a heart for one another, it is going to be hard to have a heart for those in need outside the marriage. We will put up a front, we will help people, we'll say all the right things, but down inside there is a death that is taking place. A marriage is dying. What God ordained, we are allowing to die right on the vine, when we have the power within us to take that marriage out of the mulli-grubs and put it into a "merry-age." Hallelujah! A "merry-age" for us.

The Holy Spirit is speaking to the church. Your children need to see a "merry-age" in your marriage. It is so important that we know how to take care of our family and raise them right, but the marriage was designed to outlast the children. The children will go on and marry their own husband or wife.

(Gen 2:24 KJV) Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

This is a prophetic word. Back in the garden there were only two people, and they did not have a father or mother. God was their creator, and this was the commandment that God gave. He said, "This is a principle that I am going to set for every marriage that shall ever come. This is a principle that I am starting with the first couple, and I am the same yesterday, today, and forever. I am the Lord God, I change not." His principles have not changed. God expects us to take the sanctity of marriage and separate it away from everyone else so it becomes our private affair.

Number one men, we've got to have an identification. We have to identify with the bones of my bones and the flesh of my flesh. That means that when she hurts, I hurt. When there is an ache in her life, it ought to be felt by me. You can't tell me that you can smash a finger and your whole body does not realize it is smashed. When our wife is hurting, we need to know why she is hurting. She is bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. We become one flesh with that individual.

Number two, there has to become a commitment. You leave your father and mother and you cleave to your wife. Isn't that great? To leave and to cleave. Somebody said to me, "Boy, I never really had much trouble until I got saved, and then I got married and I really have trouble." It is real simple when you sit down and

think about it. The man has his troubles, the wife has her troubles, and they don't leave them when they get married. They just pack them up and take them into that marriage. They cover them up for a little while, but those troubles are still there. So when you marry, you really got double trouble. That's true, isn't it.

We aren't really honest about this. "Well, I never had any problems until I married my wife." "I never had any problems until I married that 'ol man I'm married to." Sure you had problems; that is part of the reason you married. You probably married the gal thinking she could take care of your problems, and she thought maybe you could take care of her problems. You both came into the marriage with all your problems.

I had problems when I married, and I brought all mine right into that marriage, but I thought love would conquer everything. I did not have to have any sense, just love would take care of it. Then I found out that she brought some with her. We had to sit down and sort through all that stuff and find out what was really important. We bring all that baggage into that marriage, your trouble and her trouble, and find out that we have double trouble.

Let's look at Ephesians 5:25-33:

(Eph 5:23 KJV) 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.

(Eph 5:24 KJV) Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.

(Eph 5:25 KJV) HUSBANDS, LOVE YOUR WIVES, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

"Husbands, love your wives." I don't see any place in there that said, "If you want to." I've had people come to me and say, "Brother Krider, I believe in keeping the commandments." I said, "How about this one?" "Well, that's in the New Testament, you know." You need to look at 2 Timothy 3:16-17:

(2 Tim 3:16 KJV) All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

(2 Tim 3:17 KJV) That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

Amplified Bible says: *"Every scripture is God-breathed, given by His inspiration, and profitable for instruction, for reproof and conviction of sin, for correction of error and discipline in obedience, and for training in righteousness {that is, in holy living, in conformity to God's will in thought, purpose, and action.} So that the man of God may be complete and proficient, well-fitted and thoroughly equipped for every good work."*

This is God's direction concerning marriage and if you want your marriage to be successful, you are going to have to work at it this way. "Husbands, love your wives." Then He gives you an example doesn't he. "Even as Christ also loved the church." That is not really a new principle. Jesus told his disciples to love one another, even as He had loved them (John 15:12). That carries over into our marriage, doesn't it? Husbands, you have to love your wives, just like Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it.

(Eph 5:26 KJV) That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,

(Eph 5:27 KJV) 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.

Our marriages ought to be holy. A marriage should be set apart, sanctified unto God, so that all we are going to have in our marriage is that which glorifies the Lord. All we are going to have in our marriage is that which brings honor to the Lord. All we are going to have in our marriage is that which lifts the Lord up and exalts him in our lives.

Husbands, you've got a great responsibility. Don't blame your wife all the time. Don't say, "Well, if she'd love me." That is not what it says at all. It says, "Husbands, love your wives even as Christ loved the church." That is a pretty heavy example, isn't it? He gave Himself for the church, didn't He?

There come times when we have to deny ourselves, so our wife can have the fulfillment. There has to come a time when we just step back and say, "Okay, honey, you wanted to go shopping today, and I'll go with you." Sure I will!!! and all the way down there I'm thinking, "Oh boy, the football game is on, this is Saturday afternoon, and I wish my wife would..." You know! She is so glad to have you along, and you are mumbling, and grumbling, and griping to yourself. And every time she picks up something and looks at it, you just - awww, you know! She's just really enjoying you. Men, how many stupid things have we done, and God still loves us? Amen?

I'm serious. Marriages and families are the two things that God has laid so heavily upon my heart, and every time I go to teach it, I get fought by every power of darkness that can come against me. But I know that it is the beginning of the revival that America needs and the turning around of families does not belong to anybody but to us, the body of Christ. Amen! Not only are we to love our wives as Christ loved the church; we are also told to love our wives as we love our own bodies.

(Eph 5:28 KJV) So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.

(Eph 5:29 KJV) For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:

I've got news for you: I feed my flesh, I take good care of mine, and that is the way we ought to think. I love my wife, just like Christ loved the church. That is where I want to be. I love her like I love myself. We need to begin to think in terms of one another. Instead of what I want out of this marriage, Lord, bring what You want out of it.

(Eph 5:30 KJV) For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.

(Eph 5:31 KJV) 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.

(Eph 5:32 KJV) This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

(Eph 5:33 KJV) Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.

We are not going to dwell on the wife here; we are going to dwell on the husband. There are four things that God says in this section for us as men to do. #1 is to love, #2 is to give, #3 is to nourish, and #4 is to cherish. Write those down in your Bible or your book, but put them into your heart. It is a good way to examine yourself. Do I really love my wife as Christ loved the church? Do I really give myself into this marriage? Do I nourish this marriage? Do I cherish this marriage? When you hold fast to something, you are not apt to lose it.

You can't keep a member of a marriage from departing if they want to. That is up to them, but I am saying that you are to do your part. You cannot slack off because one member in that marriage is not acting up to their portion. You have to do what God tells you, and then if it fails, you won't have to be guilty. You won't have to say, "Well, I wish I had done something else." When you have done your part, my friend, you are free. So four things I see God demands of husbands in our marriage relationship with our wives is to love them, to give ourselves for them, to nourish them, and to cherish them.

Now look at 1 Peter 3:7:

(1 Pet 3:7 KJV) 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.

"Likewise ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge..." Underline that. Hosea 4:6 says, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." Many times your marriage is destroyed or in shambles for the lack of knowledge in knowing what God really expects of you. When we know what God expects of us in this contract of marriage, then we are able to fulfill it, aren't we. But if we are just groping around

trying to find some way to make it work, or some magic formula, or somebody to say the right thing to put it together, it is not going to work.

God did not tell the husband to dwell with his wife according to passion, or according to emotion, or according to lust. He told us to dwell with our wives according to knowledge. Get it into your heart. We have the Word of God before us.

If I do that, I am going to be giving honor unto the wife as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that our prayers be not hindered.

Dwelling as heirs together denotes unity. What we need in a marriage is unity so when we pray, we receive it. Wouldn't it be wonderful if when our children get sick, we could just go in there, both of us in total agreement, lay our hands on them, and in the name of Jesus command healing to come in that body.

It has to happen sooner or later, but because we are walking in such different avenues, not walking in oneness, but walking in two paths, something happens in our family and we are not together in unity. Oh, we pray together, but God knows that we are not dwelling together in knowledge. God knows we are not dwelling in love. God knows that we are not doing what He told us to do, and because we are disobedient in our affair with one another, then we find out God does not hear us. He said if any two of you agree, didn't He. If I want God to hear my prayer and my wife's prayer, I am going to have to be in unity with my wife.

1 Peter 3:7 Amp. Bible says: "In the same way you married men should live considerately with your wives, with an intelligent recognition of the marriage relation..."

Know what you are doing. Once in awhile review the marriage vows you took. The tragedy of the whole thing though, is that in the church marriages are failing at almost the same rate as those in the world. Isn't that tragic? The one place where love ought to abound. The one place where we have the right to love and the ability to love, we deny one another that love. And then we say, "I love you, brother." If you don't love your sister whom you have seen and you married, don't tell me you love God whom you have not seen.

See, it gets right down to put-up or shut-up time. It gets down to opening your heart and being honest with one another and saying, "Honey, I am having a problem with this area, and I think we need to pray about this." Amen! Instead we go out and tell our good ol' buddy, "Boy, you don't know what that women is like to live with." Later we come to church holding her hand and smiling, then we tell her, "Shut up woman, I've got to go pray for the sick," and we get up there and lay hands on the sick brother. It isn't going to work! If you want to prosper in God, you are going to have to prosper in your marriage. It gets a lot more serious.

1 Peter 3:7 "...while honoring the woman as [physically] the weaker, but [realizing that you] are joint heirs of the grace (God's unmerited favor) of life, in order that your prayers may not be hindered and cut off; otherwise you cannot pray effectively."

If some guy comes to me and says he has trouble praying, I ask him how his married life is, because that is where most of it stems from. Every time you get down to pray you get convicted. Every time you get down to pray, you won't repent because you know you are right. You say it is your wife that needs to repent, so you won't give yourself into that situation.

We want to be leaders in the church and we cannot even love our own wives and dwell with them according to knowledge. We wonder why they don't ever call me to pray in the prayer line. Listen, that doesn't mean only your prayers with your wife are hindered; it means you cannot pray effectively - period. Every time you go to prayer and your heart is not right, conviction comes on you and you have to fight it off, unless you want to go to your wife and say, "Honey, I am sorry." There are three words that we have a hard time saying: I AM SORRY. Three little words, especially to our wives. I am telling you, it starts with the husband. It starts with the head, and man is the head.

Colossians 3:19 in the Amplified says: "Husbands, love your wives - be affectionate and sympathetic with them - and do not be harsh or bitter or resentful toward them."

Husbands, let's be honest. Haven't there been some times when you just got bitter? There are times when the wife does something that just grinds you, and instead of sitting down and talking it over and sharing it, you walk out the door. All day long it festers in you, and that bitter root begins to defile and begins to destroy. So husbands, love your wives, be affectionate and sympathetic with them. Do not be harsh, or bitter, or resentful towards them.

Notice in Ephesians 5:23 again, "For the husband IS..." Now underline this, ladies; underline this, men. A little word, isn't it. Now we could substitute something like: he could be if he was the man he ought to be. He could be if he did what I told him to do. That is not God's plan. God's plan is that the man should be and is the head of the wife. I think this would help cut down the divorce rate, if we realized we were cutting off our own heads when we divorced.

Eph 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."

The husband is the head, to lead, to direct, giving directions spiritually or carnally, to the wife, as Christ is the head of the church, saviour of the body, covering and protection. That is what the husband is supposed to be to his wife.

Do you men think that you have really been a good head? I mean, really covered your wife? A lot of times we uncover them, by speaking evil about them or saying some little slight remark - that is uncovering. But charity covers a multitude of sin, doesn't it. Surely if we are going to cover other people, we certainly ought to be able to cover our wives. There ought to be a covering there, where a wife can feel

secure, and know that no matter if she blows it today, her husband is not going to tell on her.

Now remember, we are to love our wives as Christ loved the church; isn't that what it says? Do you know how Christ loved Judas? When He found out that Judas was going to betray him, did He tell Peter? Did He tell James? Did He tell John? No! He kept it covered, didn't He? If I am going to love my wife as Christ loved the church, I am going to have to cover my wife and not bring up faults, not bring up shortcomings, not bring anything up to anybody else. She and I may pray about it, we may discuss it, but we are going to take care of it at home, so when you see me, you will think I've got the best wife in the world.

I have heard men talking, and I honestly didn't want to meet their wives. "Well, she is always this and she is always doing that and she does this...." Then I met the women and I would already have such a prejudiced view of them. But you know, the more I was around the women, I found out it was the husband and his own bitterness that defiled everything in his life. I do not listen to them any more; I finally quit it. We need to be friends with our wives.

One man said, "Well! I am the leader of this family." Yeah, but a leader needs to earn respect. It is not going to be given to you automatically. Most of the time you have to earn it.

We find out then that a husband has a big job, doesn't he? He has to love, he has to give, he has to nourish, he has to cherish, he has to be sure that he dwells with his wife according to knowledge and not just passion or emotion. He has to be sure that he is the head that protects and provides. He is the head that sees that what comes into that marriage is right and pure and lovely.

Husbands, you are in a full-time ministry. If you are married, it is a full-time ministry to minister to that marriage. I mean that. Even if you are 100 miles or 1,000 miles away, you still have a job to pray for your wife and to cover her with your prayers and your love. God holds us responsible as husbands to be sure that this marriage works the way God intended it to work.

Let's look at 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 in the Amplified Bible. I want you to look at it and measure your love for your wife with this here, and you wives for your husbands. Examine yourselves and see if this is truly the kind of love you have for your mates.

Vs.4 Love endures long and is patient and kind; love never is envious, nor boils over with jealousy; is not boastful or vainglorious, does not display itself haughtily.

Vs.5 It is not conceited - arrogant, and inflated with pride; it is not rude (unmannerly) and does not act unbecomingly. Love (God's love in us) does not insist on its own rights or its own way, for it is not self-seeking; it is not touchy or fretful or resentful; it takes no account of the evil done to it - pays no attention to a suffered wrong.

Vs.6 It does not rejoice at injustice and unrighteousness, but rejoices when right and truth prevail.

Vs.7 Love bears up under anything and everything that comes, is ever ready to believe the best of every person, its hopes are fadeless under all circumstances and it endures everything (without weakening).

Vs.8 Love never fails - never fades out or becomes obsolete or comes to an end.

Husbands, do you think that is the kind of love we have for our wives? Take that little section and go in a bedroom by yourself. Read it again and say, "Now let's see how well I do with this. It is test time. Let me see now. How often and how quick do I give up on my wife? Man, I gave her two weeks to shape up and she still has not shaped up. I am going to turn her over to the devil for destruction of her flesh that her soul might be saved." We may not say things like that, but we walk around many times with that attitude: "If you don't shape up, you can ship out! I am the guy providing for this family. I am the head of this house."

God is talking about real love here, not the soapbox operas where they operate in lust. That is what they are doing. They are not falling in love; they do not even know what the word love means. God tells us what love really means. He said this is how it operates. Does our marriage have this kind of an operation in it, men? You women can get in on this too. I am saying that I believe that the man should initiate this kind of a love into his marriage and quit blaming the wife when everything falls apart.

What do you think would happen if we had that in our hearts? Isn't it funny how we can put up with people in the body of Christ? We tell them we love them and they act crazier than our wife does. Do you think we are telling the truth? Are we really saying, "I don't have to live with you, so it is kind of easy for me to say I love you, but I've got to live with this woman! I am going to set the standards on which this marriage is going to operate."

God says, "Wait a minute!" Your marriage, if it is going to be fruitful, if it is going to multiply, if it is going to replenish, if it is going to be blessed and it is going to be abundant, and you are going to rule and you are going to have dominion in it, God says you are going to do it by love. He said if you don't know what love is, and you don't know how it operates, how in the world can you operate in love in your marriage.

I have to admit some times, that first one gets me: ENDURES LONG. I had a bad temper, but thank the Lord, He has brought a safe guard over it now and watches over it. I used to blow it. I would come out of a revival meeting as high as a kite, see the sick healed, the lame leap for joy, the blind eyes come open, and go home and my wife could say one wrong word, and the dog ran. Everybody would clear the house, because Dad was coming unglued. I really had to pray, I really had to apologize, I really had to ask my wife to forgive me.

You think you have love in your heart, but God has to put it there, and you have to allow that love to operate. God wants us to dwell with our wives according to knowledge and love is part of God's knowledge to men and women. It is a word that comes from the Greek in this tense and it means:

1 Cor. 13:4 Love = Conc. G26. agape, from G25; love, i.e. affection or benevolence; a love-feast:--(feast of) charity, dear, love. G25. agapao, to love (in a social or moral sense):--(be-) love (-ed).

Another example of this agape love is found in Deut 6:5, and again in Luke 10:27:

"...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."

John 15:12 says:

"This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you."

Romans 5:5 says:

"...the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." This is the love of the heart.

In John 15:19 we find another kind of love:

"If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." This is called a phileo love.

Love - Conc. G5368. phileo, from G5384; to be a friend to - fond of an individual or an object, i.e. have affection for - denoting personal attachment, as a matter of sentiment or feeling; while G25 is wider, embracing espec. the judgment and the deliberate assent of the will as a matter of principle, duty and propriety:

Agape love is chiefly of the heart, and phileo of the head. Which love do we have? Do we have the kind of love that says, "Yeah, you're my wife, I acknowledge that; here's ten bucks, go out and have a good time." Or does it come from a heart that says, "Honey, you are a part of me and whatever I do to you, I will receive in like kind myself." You see, all of the Bible comes to play in a marriage. If I do not forgive, then I will not be forgiven. If I do not give love to my wife, then I shall not receive a crop of love back. So it can't be just a head love where you say, "Okay, you're my old lady."

I think that is one of the most derogatory terms that a man can use, when you say, "This is my old lady." This is not your old lady; it is your wife. You ought to be proud of saying that word. She said "yes" to you one day. She said, "Yes, I want to

spend my life with you." Hallelujah! You ought to say, "Folks, this is my beloved wife, in whom I am well pleased."

Also, you women, don't go around saying, "Well, this is the old man." NO! He is your head. You don't walk around and tell people, "Man, look how ugly I am; this is the ugliest head anybody's got in town!" No, you wash it real good, you get it to shine, you curl it, because you want everybody to see a good head on your shoulders, don't you? How about your marriage? Do people know you've got a good head? What do people think about your head in the marriage when you leave him? Is it a head love or a heart love?

Galatians 5:22 says, "The fruit of the spirit is love." Now the other eight things, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance are a fullness of that love. It is exactly what love is. It is like an orange, and inside the orange are all of the slices. All of those listed above are contained in the fruit of the spirit: LOVE.

We need a love that is mature, don't we? We do not need a green love. We do not need a love that is selfish. We need a love that is mature so when our wife or our husband has a real problem, they can come to us, and instead of getting bitterness, they get the sweet peace of that love. They get the sweet long-suffering. They get the sweet gentleness and kindness of that love that we have in our heart.

The question is not whether God is right or wrong here. The absolute truth is: GOD IS RIGHT. The only question is, am I going to listen to His right, or am I going to walk along in my wrong? Do I want to walk in light? Do I want to walk in truth? Do I want to walk in these things? Or would I rather just kind of stumble along and do what I want to do.

Now remember, this love is either of the heart or of the head. Now if it is of the heart, then you recognize something: that mate is the other part of you. It is not the old lady. It is not the old man. We have the same heart, don't we, because we are ONE! If we have the same heart, I am going to love her and she's going to love me. If we have the same mind, we are going to start seeing things alike, aren't we? We are going to take the different views and begin to let them melt down in long-suffering and with gentleness and kindness, and we are going to let them melt together in the love of God until those two opinions become one vision.

There is nothing wrong with having two opinions as long as you can bring them together in the love of God and see where they match together. If I stretch my arms out to my sides, the right hand is way over here, and the left hand is way over on the other side, but they still belong to the same body. When I bring them together, there is a strength in them that is not in the one hand or the other, and that is like a marriage. The wife brings a strength into it; the husband brings a strength into it. When they unite and are locked together in ONE, they have the power of God in the midst of that marriage, to ask, to believe, and to receive anything that they can in unity and faith agree on.

The enemy comes along and says, "Wait a minute; your wife is not worth a whole lot. Hey man, what you ought to do is get rid of her and get a new one. I mean,

after all, this is a new model year, isn't it. Each year we bring out the old models and get rid of them, and bring out the new models."

In America we are continually browbeat with this. Get something new; get something more exciting. If there is no excitement in your marriage, it is not the devil's fault, it is not God's fault because He wants you to have a "Merry-Age"; it's your fault. You lose the thrill and the excitement of looking at that person and saying as a husband, "THIS IS IT, PRAISE GOD! AND IT IS GETTING BETTER WITH AGE!"

I don't know about you, but I hate to throw old shoes away. They just start fitting your feet, and boy, they feel so comfortable. You can just get down in there on your old toes and that leather just fits around them. About the time you've got them broken in, somebody says, "You need a new pair. Those are all scarred up and they are all busted up, and they..." Man, they fit good, but you want to look better, so you get a new pair of shoes and you walk around with your toes crinkled up in the ends of them and you can hardly stand up. That is what we do in marriages. We just say, "Well, yeah, that person there, you know, just does not really do anything for me anymore." The first thing you know, you are all alone in life. Even living in the same house with that individual, you are all alone.

Do you want your marriage to become really one in Christ, where when you see the husband, you see the wife; and when you see the wife, you see the husband. I can talk to a wife just a few moments and know what her husband is like. If she is happy she feels at peace and secure, and I know she has a good husband. If she is full of fears and doubt and frustration and anxiety, I know there is a problem there. Her husband is not providing the protection. He is not providing the covering. He is not providing the secure place for his wife. Husbands, we've got a big job! The world has to look at us and see Christ and the church. We cannot always be pushing it off on somebody else.

All right, there are four things God expects out of men in marriage. He said, "Love your wives." Paul said let a man so examine himself to see whether he be in the faith (2 Cor. 13:5). That means in your marriage too. Do you really feel like you are loving your wife just like 1 Cor. 13:4-8 explains love to be? Do you believe that your love is long-suffering? Do you believe that your love is gentle and just totally what God wants it to be towards your wife? Do you truly feel that you and your wife are ONE, and have allowed God to be that three-fold cord?

When love sees an area that is weak, it comes to the aide of that weakness with the strength of Christ. It never takes that weakness and flaunts it before other members of the body of Christ or any individual. That is the long-suffering value of Christ's love. Again I want to remind you that Jesus never told on Judas. He was about to be betrayed by him, He was about to be murdered, and yet He never told on Judas; but how quick we are to point out weaknesses in our mate's life. It makes us look better, doesn't it? That is not love; that is pride. Sooner or later that pride goes before a fall.

When we husbands love our wives and dwell with them according to knowledge, we are going to cover them, we are going to protect them, we are going to

surround them with our love, until they feel safe to make a mistake. I know a lot of marriages today that are afraid to make mistakes, they are afraid to be themselves, because they know they are going to be in trouble the moment they open their mouth. That should not be if we husbands love our wives as Christ loved the church.

How many ignorant, stupid, idiotic things do you think that we have said to the Lord, men? How many promises have we made God and never kept? How many times have we told God that we were going to do something and never did it? I am saying to you that God covers our foolishness. How about the husband loving his wife like Christ loves us? Do you think that we could cover our wives foolishness if she has any? Protect her, and if she wants to be foolish, let her be foolish a little bit; it won't kill you.

God is saying: #1 - If we are going to do what God wants, we are going to have to love our wives like Christ loves the church. #2 - Then we are going to have to give ourselves, just like Christ gave Himself for us. There are a lot of times a wife needs a husband, but he is too busy with something that he does not need to do, but that he wants to do. There were times when my wife really needed me to give her understanding, and give her a time of day, and give her something that she needed, and what did I do? I had to go out and fulfill the desire of my heart.

If you have never done that be on the watch for it, because it is easy to do unconsciously and unaware. We need to become very conscious of the needs of our wives. We need to become conscious of the weakness, that they are the weaker vessel, whether we want to admit it or not. #3 - Then He said to nourish your wife. Nourish means to strengthen. How many times do we just walk off and leave the wife and maybe she needs us. We just walk away and leave her, when we should have been sure that the other part of us was strengthened, nourished, fed, filled up, becoming strong.

Husbands, we've got a big responsibility here. We have to quit blaming other people for our failures in our marriage. The marriage boils down to this: do I want it to succeed and on whose terms do I want it to succeed - on mine or on God's? If it succeeds on mine, it will be short-term because I will have to prop it up; but if it succeeds on God's terms, it is in for a long run. It is in for a "Merry-Age." It is in for a joyful season. It is in for fulfillment. It is in for a fruitful time. It is in the blessing of God.

Where do you want to be successful? I want to be successful in my marriage. I mean that. I don't care about being a successful preacher, an evangelist, or whatever. That will happen as God makes it happen. But I have to be involved in making my marriage successful. I want my marriage to be fruitful; I want it to multiply. I want it to be a marriage that has dominion over the imps of hell that try to steal in there and rob from me.

The fourth thing that God wants us to do is to "cherish" our wives. I think in some of the wedding vows we take, one of the words that we have in there is cherish, isn't it. To honor and to cherish, as long as we both shall live. That really did feel good for six months, didn't it. Everything was going along lovely, like getting saved. When you first got saved, everything was lovely, everybody was lovely. But all of a

sudden, you began to look back again through the eye of the natural man and you saw it was not like you thought it was.

A marriage starts off with hearts usually that want to be together, but they quit cherishing their time together. They begin to bring more and more things and people into their marriage until their life is filled with people and things, instead of cherishing those moments alone together and setting time apart together where the husband can cherish his wife and remind her how much he really loves her. You just run in the house and say, "Hi, honey, what's for dinner?" That's really cherishing her? Or in the morning you get up, and you take a shower and your wife is making the coffee. You come out there and you are still about half blind trying to get it all together to go to work, and your wife says, "Honey, I need to talk to you for a few minutes." "I'm sorry, but I don't have time for you. I've got things to do today, and it is important that I get them done. I'll talk to you tonight."

That repeats month after month, and pretty soon the wife is not asking the husband anymore. She is asking somebody else. When you stop cherishing your wife, you are asking for trouble to move right into your home. You don't take time to express your love and tell your wife how important she really is to you. Does Jesus ever express His love to you? Doesn't He every day in some way, in some little thing, show you how much He loves you? He gets you up in the morning, doesn't He? You've got a sound mind to walk around in. You can walk around in love, and you can walk around in His presence. He is expressing how much He cherishes us at all times.

What do you think would happen if we guys would call our wife about noon some time and say, "Honey, I just wanted to call you and tell you I love you!" She would probably have a heart attack and say, "Was that my husband? He must have gotten the wrong number!" You see, we need to cherish our wife while we are doing anything. She needs to be at the forefront of our mind and our hearts. The marriage relationship is not something you walk out of when you leave the bedroom and out the door to work. It is something that husbands are not doing today that needs to be done more and more; it is cherishing their wives. You might say, "Well, I've got a pretty good marriage." If it is just pretty good, it could be better.

I would like to see this high divorce rate stopped. I want to see marriages back where God intended them to be, where the man takes his rightful place and is not ashamed to protect his wife. I remember when I was a kid, you could walk into a cafe and if somebody said something vulgar, a man got up and said, "Hey, my wife is present. Would you mind not talking like that." He cherished her, didn't he? He showed public affection toward her. He showed public care for her. He did not want her polluted by the words that were going to be unclean and filthy.

We need to build an environment, men, around our marriage. It needs to be a sanctified marriage. It needs to be a marriage set apart where all the filth and all the uncleanness cannot come in there. You men have the opportunity and you have the commandment from God to set the economy for your home; what you are going to have in that home; what you are going to have in that marriage. We need to start cherishing our wives and not be ashamed to say, "This is my wife. I want you to

watch how you talk around her." You might say, "That's old chivalry." Well, it may be old chivalry but it works, friend.

It's when we got this independent thing in marriages that it began to come apart. When the wife became independent and the husband became independent, then they tried to get together and become dependent over night. It does not work. There has to be a dependency built in our marriages. You need your wife and the wife needs her husband. You do not need all the world; you need one another.

So God said there has to be a loving like Christ loved. There has to be a giving of ourself, a dying to self, and there has to be a nourishing and a strengthening in that marriage. And then, there has to be a cherishing, a loving, an enfolding, a caring. You might say, "Well, I have been married 50 years and we do not need all that stuff." Yes you do. You probably lost it 25 years ago and are still trying to find it, but the Lord is telling you how to get it back in there where it belongs.

The world needs to look at a church and see Christ in the church. How are they going to see that? They are going to see it by the way the husband treats the wife and how the wife responds to the husband. It is a great mystery. A marriage is a mystery; it is a mysterious thing. One moment it can be so filled with compassion and the next moment it can be loaded with hate and even murder in it. Two people have to dissolve into one person and that is into Christ, until Christ is seen in our lives.

The Body of Christ needs to be involved in marriages. The worst thing we can do is to take sides in a marriage that is going bad. When we see a marriage breaking up, we need to begin to fast and pray. We need to continue to pray and help bring that marriage back together.

All over this country, men are beginning to see their responsibility and take it. Women are beginning to see their responsibility and move into it. I am telling you that we, above everything else, must realize that we need to be involved daily with one another when we see each other. When we don't see one another, we should be daily involved in praying for the marriages in the body of Christ. When you start praying for somebody else's marriage, and really care about them, you are going to find something else happening in your life: your marriage will start getting better.

When you get ahold of your wife's hand and you bow down and you say, "Honey, let's pray for the marriages in the body of Christ," and you start praying, you find a new love and excitement in your own heart towards the one that you are married to. I need to hear the word of God, whether it is in my marriage, whether it is in my single personal life, whether it is in my business, whatever it is in, I need to put it under the guidance of the Holy Spirit of God. Amen!

THE DUTIES OF WOMAN

Chapter 3

Ladies, now we are going to see what God considers the duties of the women. To make anything work, you first of all need to know what the rules are, and then we want to apply the rules to our lives.

First we are going to look at Ephesians 5:22:

(Eph 5:22 KJV) Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.

"Wives submit." Now that word is not slavery, okay? Somehow we take that word and we misuse it. Eph 5:21 tells us that we are to submit ourselves one to another in the fear of God, not just for wives to submit themselves to their husbands, but actually each one of us in the body of Christ need to learn how to submit, because submission is totally contrary to human nature. Human nature wants to be exalted. It wants to be noticed, it wants to be seen, it wants to be heard, but submission is a tender word.

Submit - Conc. #5293 = to subordinate; to obey:--be under obedience (obedient), put under, subdue unto, (be, make) subject (to, unto), be (put) in subjection (to, under), submit self unto.

It means that we bring ourselves under control, and if there is anything that we need today it is to be under control. So it says here, "*Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands AS UNTO THE LORD.*" We are told that whatsoever we do in word and deed, to do it heartily as unto the Lord and not unto men (Col. 3:17).

Col. 3:17 Amp Bible says: "And whatever you do - no matter what it is - in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus and in dependence upon His person, giving praise to God the Father through Him. "

There is really nothing contrary here, is there? It is just a principle that God wants the wife to practice so she can take her rightful place under the covering and protection of her husband. We studied earlier and saw how the husband had a grave responsibility to be protective, to be a provider for his wife. I do not see anything wrong with that. But we are told to submit ourselves unto God, aren't we? Why? Because by submitting ourselves, we are putting ourselves under protection. I like that. He said, "Wives, I want you to be protected, and the way for you to really be protected is to be submitted to your own husbands as unto the Lord."

That would be a good point to check yourselves, to find out how you are submitted to your husbands. You are submitted because the Word says it, or because you want to be. I would think the way to be profitable is to want to be submissive, contrary to the human nature.

Notice in Eph 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."

Again, wives must acknowledge this. It is not that you are going to make your husband your head if he gets good enough, or if he proves himself. God's Word says he is. A woman said to me in counseling that her husband was terrible, and she did not want him to be her head. I told her it didn't make any difference what she wanted because God said he is. He may be a terrible head, but he is still the head and you cannot bypass the head. You cannot go around the head. You have to realize that you have to honor that head. Start praying that God will begin to do a good work in your heart first and then He will do a work in the head's part.

The wife has to acknowledge this in her marriage. She has to acknowledge that by submitting herself to that head. Look at Eph. 5:24:

"Therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything."

"Therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ..." I am afraid that most wives do not have a very good example. The church is not very submissive. God said, "Do

this," and we vote on it. Isn't that the truth? Or if we decide to do something, we will just do what we want to do, and God can get in on the act later. So the wives really have not had the example that they need of submission. Everybody doing their own thing, everybody going their own way, and saying I am on my way to heaven, I'm a Christian. Something is wrong here. There needs to be a submissive spirit in the church.

Paul expected the church to live in such a way that the wife could look and see how the members of the body of Christ were submitted to the will of God. It's a terrible thing for the church not to be an example to the world, but especially to the wives who need to know how to submit themselves to their husbands, to have that spirit of love and kindness and mercy working. I live in a world of reality. I know what is going on. 90% of the church is not submitted to God; it is submitted to its own desires, but that does not exempt the wife from becoming submissive to her husband, even though she does not have a good example.

The Amplified version says, *"As the church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands."*

Everything means your family, your finances, whatever area of life that is involved in your marriage, there has to be a partnership working together. There needs to be somebody really responsible. My wife lets me be responsible. If anybody is going to get in trouble in our marriage, she wants it to be me and not her. Amen? Ladies, that is smart. If I make a decision and she says, "Okay, honey," guess who gets in trouble if that is a wrong decision? Not my wife. She submitted to me, and I got in trouble. My wife doesn't stand around and say, "na, na, na, na, na, na." She may grin a little bit, but she is safe.

Let me tell you something, wives; a little secret here. Your husband may be a mess. He may make lots of stupid decisions. Don't rebel against him; pray for him. Don't despise him, pray for him, because God will deal with him. But if you come out from underneath that covering and begin to judge the covering that God gave you, the head God gave you, you are going to be in real big trouble.

He said in Ephesians 5:33, *"Nevertheless, let everyone of you in particular, so love his wife, even as himself..."* We covered that earlier, but this part, *"and the wife see that she reverence her husband."* Now look at Eph 5:33 in the Amp. Bible:

"However, let each man of you (without exception) love his wife as being in a sense his very own self; and let the wife see that she respects and reverences her husband - that she notices him, regards him, honors him, prefers him, venerates and esteems him; and that she defers to him, praises him, and loves and admires him exceedingly."

All of that comes from the word reverence. Isn't that something. We, as the body of Christ, are to reverence the most high God.

*(Psa 89:7 KJV) God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints,
and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him.*

The Word of God tells wives that you need to reverence your husband. You need to praise him every now and then. You need to give him honor where honor is due. It won't hurt you. I've heard wives say, "Well, if my husband had noticed me, I'd notice him." It does not say that here. It says, "You notice him! You defer to him."

We need to understand what the Word of God is saying. It is a very serious thing when we begin to think that we can live our married life anyway we want to, and God is going to bless it. He will not. He will not bless you when you live contrary to the Word of God. I want marriages to be blessed. I want them to be fruitful, I want them to multiply, I want them to live in the blessing and the abundance of God. When we live contrary to the Word of God, I do not care who is praying for us, I don't care how much they pray, until we line up in our part in that marriage, that marriage will never be blessed.

I cannot live my wife's part. I can only live mine, but I can be there to help her. The wife cannot live the husband's part; she can live her part. If she lives her part, God will honor her. He will begin to work on her husband.

If somebody came up to you today and said, "Woman, why don't you cut your head off," what would you do? You would say, "No way! I'm not committing suicide." Well, the Bible said that the husband is the head of the wife! Think twice about trying to get rid of one another and begin to love one another, begin to care about, and begin to build together, working together with Christ in that marriage, and it will be a great thing.

Look at 1 Peter 3:1-6:

1 Pet 3:1 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;

Subjection means the same as submit. It means to obey or submit to that person who has the authority in that area of your life. Submission is just a spiritual work in your heart. If you are not submitted to God, you will never be submitted to your husband; and if you are not submitted to your husband, you will not be submitted to God. Submission is something that has to be a desire in your heart. There is a protection there for you.

1 Peter 3:2 While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear.

Notice the power you women have in your family. Now what we need is that godly fear, isn't it? We need that godly fear in our marriage, so what we are doing may be acceptable in the sight of the Lord, may be blessed by God. I am not going to bring my own rules into this marriage. If I want my marriage to prosper, there is

only one way it can be done, and that is for my marriage to line up with God. You wives who have husbands that are not living where they ought to live, don't criticize them; begin to live like God told you to live, because you have power in your conversation. You have power in the life that you live, as long as you live it in the fear of God.

1 Pet 3:3 Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel;

1 Pet 3:4 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.

Whose adorning, let it not be that of the outward adorning of plaiting of the hair, the wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel, but let it be the hidden man of the heart. Your beauty may be all right now, but when you get a few more years down the road, it is not like it was when you were 20 years old, so you cannot hold a husband by just dressing up on the outside. There has to be something deeper than that. There has to be a beauty that locks that husband's love into your life.

The apostle is writing this to the church so we can live godly. He is not picking on anybody. There are many people that are consciously aware of their outward man and do little about their inward man, and yet the Lord said that is where the power comes from. It does not come from the kind of hair you have, it does not come from what kind of apparel you wear, but it is that hidden man that is in communication with God. If that hidden man is allowed to take over and rule your life, there is an inner beauty that comes forth, and even a person that is ugly begins to look good.

Haven't you seen a woman you thought was beautiful, but the next day you see her without any makeup, and she is not pretty at all. You can take a person though who is just an ordinary looking individual, but when that hidden man of the heart is manifest, there is an inward beauty that draws an individual to that person. If we are trying to get this marriage to work by all that we can do outwardly, we are in real trouble.

So he said, "*Women, let it be that hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible...*" Your outward man is corruptible; your outward man is perishing. You don't look like you did 20 years ago, and when you get older you can look back 40 years and you can see you really don't look like you did when you had it all together. You notice it takes more to keep it together now than it used to. "*...in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and a quiet spirit...*" Your flesh is corruptible, and if you are going to try to hold your marriage by the outward strength, you've got real problems.

1 Pet 3:5 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:

1 Pet 3:6 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.

Sarah pleased God. She called Abraham, "Lord." Abraham gave Sarah away twice. How many of you women would go back to your husband if he gave you away twice? One time? Or if he even thought about it? Abraham actually, out of fear, gave his wife away twice. He also slept with another women and had a child by her, at Sarah's beckoning; but Sarah became angry when he took counsel from her. I am saying this man was a renegade and yet he was the father of the faithful. Sara did not criticize Abraham or make fun of him or call him all kinds of names; she simply did what he told her to do. She called him "Lord" (Gen. 18:3).

You might say: "Well, I cannot live with that husband of mine." I've got news for you: some of the heathen that Christians have married do not intend to get converted. That is why I tell you, before you get married you better really know that individual, and know if they love the Lord Jesus Christ, or you will end up by yourself.

God is talking here about the power you women have as a wife. If you line up with these scriptures, you are going to find out that your family will begin to change. The wife has a tremendous amount of power with God when she operates in the Spirit, when she concentrates on the Spirit-man. When she operates in a meek and a quiet spirit. Look at Proverbs 15:1-4:

(Prov 15:1 KJV) A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.

(Prov 15:2 KJV) The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright: but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness.

(Prov 15:3 KJV) The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.

(Prov 15:4 KJV) A wholesome tongue is a tree of life: but perverseness therein is a breach in the spirit.

A soft answer turns away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger. You want to quit having arguments in your home? Learn to keep your mouth closed. James 1:19 says to be swift to hear, slow to speak, and slow to wrath. "Well! I have to get in the last word. I've got to tell you how I feel." Who really cares? If you've gone around and told a lot of people how you feel, you may notice they avoid you the next time around. Nobody really cares how you feel in the flesh. They are there to help you in your marriage if you will let them, and quit criticizing one another.

So here he is talking to the women. Do you really want to work in power? Do you really want to see a mighty work of God in your marriage? This is how it works. You can even win him without the Word if he sees Christ in you. If he sees the works of God in you. If he sees the manifestation of Christ living in you, it will draw him to the Lord.

Look at the Amplified version of what we just read in 1 Peter 3:1-6:

Vs.1 In like manner you married women, be submissive to your own husbands - subordinate yourselves as being secondary to and dependent on them, and adapt yourselves to them. So that even if any do not obey the Word of God, they may be won over not by discussion, but by the godly lives of their wives. Underline that.

Vs.2 When they observe the pure and modest way in which you conduct yourselves, together with the reverence for your husband. That is, you are to feel for him all that reverence includes - to respect, defer to, revere him, {revere means} to honor, esteem, appreciate, prize, and in the human sense, adore him; {and adore means} to admire, praise, be devoted to, deeply love, and enjoy your husband.

Vs.3 Let not yours be the merely external adorning with elaborate interweaving and knotting of the hair, the wearing of jewelry, or changes of clothes;

Vs.4 But let it be the inward adorning and beauty of the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible and unfading charm of a gentle and peaceful spirit, which is not anxious or wrought up, but is very precious in the sight of God.

Vs.5 For it was thus that the pious women of old who hoped in God were accustomed to beautify themselves, and were submissive to their husbands - adapting themselves to them as themselves secondary and dependent upon them.

Vs.6 It was thus that Sarah obeyed Abraham (following his guidance and acknowledging his headship over her by) calling him Lord -master, leader, authority. And you are now her true daughters if you do right and let nothing terrify you - not giving away to hysterical fears or letting anxieties unnerve you.

Women, don't get all shaky and go to pieces if people tell you that your marriage is in trouble. If the hidden man of your heart has been communicating with God, you will not be moved by what you see or hear. You will be moved by faith. You should begin to pray that your marriage will become all that God ordained it to be, and begin to live in such a way that your husband can see the meek, the quiet, the gentle and the peaceful spirit, and feel that comfort. Even though in the world husbands feel turmoil, when they come home they should feel a peace.

I think one of the most convicting things in my life was when I would come in angry and mad at the world, and I wanted to take it out on my wife, the dogs, or anything that was in the way; and my wife would not fight back. She would not argue with me. It is tough to argue with somebody who won't argue with you. Amen? I would simply get convicted and she never said a word.

It means something when you women are under the control of the Holy Spirit in your marriage and not under the control of anxieties or fears or frustrations or doubt or all these other things where you want to fight back. That is the first thing that happens. A guy comes in messed up; the wife wants to fight back. But what if there is nothing to fight when he comes in the house? What if there is nothing to get him riled up; when all he finds is peace in his home. It is kinda convicting, fellows.

Wives, you have so much power with God when you operate in the hidden man of the heart, when you operate in that which is incorruptible, because God is influenced by that. You see, wives try to change their husbands, and husbands try to change their wives. We have it all figured out how they ought to be. We are not

concerned about what God wants them to be; we are concerned about what we want them to be. That is wrong. I am talking about partners in a marriage. God will change the hearts of individuals if we let him. Don't be so quick to jump out of something.

He says to submit to your own husbands, recognize (underline that word) the power in the conversation and godly lifestyle of the manifestation of the hidden man of the heart. Do you women truly realize how much power you have with God? I think a lot of times wives feel they are a secondary part of the marriage, but they are not. They are one with that husband. They are as much a part of that marriage as the husband is. That is like saying the head does not need the body. The head is not good without the body, neither the body without the head. They are one body.

When you women begin to pray and ask God, and study the Word and begin to act according to the Word of God, conviction comes to that husband. He begins to say, "I need to change." You do not have to point a finger at him; he already knows he needs to change. You are just told to have a meek and quiet spirit, do well, and be not afraid with any amazement.

Colossians 3:18 says: "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands; as it is fit in the Lord."

In other words, this is God's plan, isn't it? This is not my plan; this is God's plan; and if you line up with His plan, you are going to be blessed. It is amazing how we want to line up in other areas of our life and let God bless us, but if your marriage is messed up, the blessings are not coming. If there is anything in that marriage you can do to change it and you are not doing it, forget it. The blessings are not coming.

Whether you are male or female, whether you are husband or wife, you cannot ignore the fact that your marriage is of primary importance in the sight of God. God instituted marriage. That was not man's idea. Man's idea today is to live together and then when you get tired of that one, change. It is a corrupted world that we live in. God's plan was in the beginning; He created man and women. His desire is that marriages should prosper, but it is not always the man that makes it prosper; it takes the wife also.

Earlier in the study, we taught how the men needed to take their place of authority, and their responsibility, and their covering, and their protection for the women. But if the women don't take advantage of that covering and submit themselves to that authority, you can have everybody in the country pray for you, it is not going to work. I would be neglecting my duty if I told you otherwise.

Col. 3:18 Amp. Bible says: "Wives, be subject to your husbands - subordinate and adapt yourselves to them - as is right and fitting and your proper duty in the Lord."

Paul was not a hater of women; he was just telling the truth. He said, "God has a plan for your marriage, and if you don't put it together right, you are not going

to be blessed." He gives the role of the man and he gives the role of the women. One not less than the other; one not greater than the other.

Can you name any of the parts of your body that you would like to lose? It is all important, isn't it? We need them all. If somebody said, "Well, just take your head off and put it on a shelf," or "Okay, unscrew your head and throw your body away," you would never do that even if you could. And yet in our marriage we do not seem to see that our marriage represents Christ and the church. God is not throwing the church away, and the church can certainly not throw away Christ. For my marriage to be a potentially great one for God, it has to be a marriage wherein both are working together.

You do not have a good marriage just because you married somebody. No! After awhile you find out about them. When they did not live with you, it wasn't really a problem. They took you out on a date, took you here and there, brought you flowers or whatever. Took you out to McDonald's and really spent the whole load on you. They took you home and dropped you off. This is Prince Charming.

"This is the guy I want to spend my whole life with, Mama." Mama is saying, "Settle down!" "Oh, I can't wait! I want to get married right now." And then after you get married your eyes become open. He doesn't even take you to McDonald's anymore. All the glamour and glitter is gone. What I am saying is true.

To get that marriage working right, both partners have to want it to survive, and they have to work together. When one partner is wrong, they need to admit it. The other partner shouldn't jump up and just continually harass that person and say, "If you would change, we could get along a lot better." Examine yourself and see whether you are doing your part before you ever, ever, think about pointing a finger. If you are not doing your part, you are as guilty as the husband or wife in that marriage. It takes two to make it work.

1 Timothy 5:14 says: "I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully."

Notice three things he wanted the young women to do: (1) to marry, (2) to have children, (3) to guide the house and give no occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully. We see too much on television that makes things look good that are not good. I had to counsel with a person who wanted to pattern their life after some soapbox. This person said to me, "Well, everybody is doing it." I said, "No, no, no. Everybody is not doing it. Everybody is not cheating. Everybody is not sleeping around. Everybody is not running around." See how they deceive themselves. They say everybody is doing it, so it is okay for me to do it.

We have to come to a place when we will stand up and say, "I don't care who is doing it; I am not doing it. I am lining up with God's word, and there is not going to be any reproach that I am going to bring into this family or into this marriage that can be spoken against God." We need to be jealous for the Lord.

As a wife, you are representing Christ and the church with your husband. Even if your husband doesn't want to take his place and do right, that does not release you from your duty. Even if the wife does not do right, it does not release the husband from doing that which is right. God is trying to bring His attention and plan to our hearts.

We are going to look at Proverb 31:10-12, 27-29 in the Amp. Bible:

Vs.10 "A capable, intelligent, and virtuous woman..."

Virtuous, according to Conc. #2428 and Dict. = to be strong, be valiant, have valor, be worthy, be able, be morally excellent or good, chaste, virtue, and righteous.

I love that, don't you? We are talking about a physical marriage now. Wives ought to have this quality in their life. If there is anything spoken about a wife, it ought to be that she is virtuous. She is a virtuous woman.

Vs.10 A capable, intelligent and virtuous woman, who is he who can find her? She is far more precious than jewels, and her value is far above rubies or pearls.

Vs.11 The heart of her husband trusts in her confidently and relies on and believes in her safely, so that he has no lack of honest gain nor need of dishonest spoil.

Vs.12 She will comfort, encourage, and do him only good as long as there is life within her.

Vs.27 She looks well to how things go in her household, and the bread of idleness {gossip, discontent and self-pity} she will not eat.

Vs.28 Her children rise up and call her blessed {happy, fortunate, and to be envied}; and her husband boasts of and praises her saying,

Vs.29 Many daughters have done virtuously, nobly and well {with the strength of character that is steadfast in goodness} but you excel them all.

If your husband never says anything about you like that, it is probably because you are not living like this. Amen? If you want your husband to boast on you, and your children to call you blessed, you've got to be a virtuous woman. There is no other way around it. There is no way to try to cut the Word up and say, "Well, I don't believe this part; let's just rip this out of the Bible."

How much of the Bible do you suppose you'd have left if we ripped out what we didn't like? If we took a vote in the church and one says, "Well, I don't like that," and another one says, "I don't like this," and another one says, "I don't like that." Soon we've just got two covers left. Then someone says, "Well, I don't like these covers because it says Holy on here, and they are just two covers so they can't be holy." Before long we have no Bible left.

That is how it happens in our life. We take a little of the Word of God that we don't want to apply to our life and we get rid of it. Before long, because we got rid of

that, it is easy to get rid of something else in the Word that we don't like. Soon our marriage is in real trouble.

I don't care what kind of a husband you have, my friend, the virtuous woman is blessed of God, and her opportunity to see her husband won to Christ is beyond the imagination of men. Isn't that something? I know if I was a woman, I'd like my kids to call me blessed {happy, to be envied}, wouldn't you?

If you are in a bad marriage, do something about it. You live your part and let God take care of the rest of it. If the old boy splits, let him split. Too many times we try to put things together in our own strength, then when it comes unraveled, we blame ourselves and get guilty. But thank God, if we have lived the Word of God and lived the life of God and lived where God told us to live, if it comes apart, brothers and sisters, let God be glorified because you did everything that God told you to do. But woe unto us if we have not lived our part and that other mate says, "I can't stand it anymore," and they take off. Then we begin to feel guilty. Then we begin to feel like we failed. But when we have done all the Word says, and we stand and it comes unglued at the seams, don't feel guilty.

Not every marriage is going to last, unfortunately, but we can cut down the number of those that fall apart. We can begin to see more marriages become strong before they fall apart. We can see more healings in marriages before they come loose at the seams. But if I don't know what to do about it or what my responsibility is in that marriage, I am going to walk around ignorant. I am going to walk around without knowledge and people who have no knowledge perish, don't they? If you want your marriage to perish, just don't let the knowledge of God come into it.

Proverbs 12:4 says: "A virtuous women is a crown to her husband, but she that maketh ashamed, is as rottenous in his bones."

Man, that sure is a hard description, isn't it? I like the Bible though; it talks pretty straight. Amen! Wives, I told the men to examine themselves; now I am telling you to examine yourselves and see if you think you really measure up to God's mark. If not, you need to get busy working on your lives, and surrendering and committing your lives to Christ and saying, "Lord, I am going to line up with the Word of God," and you will not have time to be too worried about whether your husband is shaping up. You would find that peace would be in there. It would be like Daniel in the lions den or the three Hebrew children in the fiery furnace; it did not make any difference what the circumstance was, the presence of the Lord was there.

I have talked to many men and women who are going through hard places in their marriages, but the ones that I find that are really at peace, even though in the midst of the storm, are those that have done everything God has told them to do and there is no bitterness in their heart. Their compassion is for that individual to be restored and saved. Amen!

DUTIES OF THE BODY OF CHRIST

Chapter 4

Every individual in the body of Christ needs to be concerned about marriages in the body of Christ, and be involved; be ready to help when they can. We are going to look at Titus 2:3-5:

(Titus 2:3 KJV) The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things;

(Titus 2:4 KJV) That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children,

(Titus 2:5 KJV) To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.

Underline the aged women; the mature women. You may say, "Well, I saw this grandmother, and she was an alcoholic!" That does not mean a thing. A person can't quit doing what God told them to do, because somebody else decides not to do it. But if they know it is in the Word of God, and they don't do it, they become disobedient to it. If an aged woman tells a wife to just get rid of that husband, she is not obeying the Word of God. That is the counsel of a lot of people today; don't stay in there, don't work it out, just get rid of the rascal. The aged women are to be teachers. They are to teach the wives to love their husbands, to love their children, to be keepers at home, to be chaste.

I think it is great! It is going to happen in the whole body of Christ. Women that are aged are going to begin to take their rightful authority and place. When a young wife comes and says, "Mom, I'm going to get rid of that guy," she is going to start teaching that wife to love her husband.

There is an amazing thing here. The word says for husbands to love their wives, doesn't it? But you women have to learn how. He commands me to love my wife, but he tells my wife to learn how to love me. That is exactly what the Word is teaching; it is not some new doctrine that I am throwing in here!

What has happened though is that so many elder women are not taking their rightful position. They are saying, "I'm too old; I am of no value. I guess I will just go to church till Jesus comes." You are wrong, because you are neglecting a duty that is sorely needed in the body of Christ. You are told in the Word that when you become of age, you become of value.

The world says, "What value are you? I will retire you and get somebody younger." This system is all messed up. Just about the time a man or woman gets smart enough to work in a company and make money for it, they retire them, and train somebody all over again. It is a process. Unfortunately the church adopted that process, and when a person gets of real value, they retire them.

You women that have no children at home now, you women that have no responsibility at home, you are mature; you actually have become aged women. That doesn't mean you are 100 years old either. It simply means that you have been through it, you have raised yours, you know what it is like.

The thing you begin to instill in the younger women, #1 is to love their husbands. Not despise them, not get even with them or get rid of them, but to love them. There is not enough love in the world, and if the church does not have it, where is it going to come from? Women are wanting to get rid of their husbands, husbands are wanting to get rid of their wives, and both of them are wanting to get rid of their kids. It is because there is no love.

The ones that have that love, the mature ones, have been through the hard places. They need to be reinvesting that love back in the younger ones, so they will not make the mistakes that they made. I said to my son, "I need to talk to you before you go through what I went through. I need to tell you how to avoid the pitfalls that my Dad forgot to tell me about. He loved me, but he forgot to tell me." You don't love people when you tell them to run away from a hard situation. You love them when you tell them how to cope with that situation and how to get in there and believe God to change that situation.

Let's look at the Amplified version in Titus 2:3-5:

Vs. 3: Bid the older women similarly to be reverent and devout in their deportment, as becomes those engaged in sacred service...

Underline sacred service. You older women are engaged in sacred (not secret), service. A lot of us want to become secret agents for the Lord; nobody knows we are. God said, "Wait a minute! It is a sacred work." Isn't that wonderful.

Vs. 3: ...not slanderous, or slaves to drink.

If you aren't free, forget about teaching somebody else. It is like a heroin addict trying to get another one delivered. They say, "You shouldn't take that stuff; it is going to kill you, man," and they are wiped out. It is like one drunk trying to instruct another drunk. No! They need an example of godliness. They need an example of a godly life so when you talk to them, your life backs up what you are saying.

Vs. 3: ...They are to give good counsel and be teachers of what is right and noble."

How do I know what is right and how do I know what is noble? It is all found in the Word of God. Philippians 4:8 tells us what to think on:

(Phil 4:8 KJV) Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

If you are going to be a good counselor, you have to know what is right and what is noble:

Vs. 4: So that they will wisely train the young women to be sane and sober-minded - temperate, disciplined -....

That doesn't mean the young women are insane. The dictionary reference says sane means to have a sound healthy mind, having sound judgment or good sense. If you ever had any children, weren't there times you just swore they were insane? They went crazy and did lots of weird things. You watch two young people in their married life, and if somebody doesn't step in and help balance them out, they go completely insane!

He said you older women have a sacred job to do. You see, all the ministry is not done behind the pulpit; that is only a little portion of it. Most of the ministry in the body of Christ is given by the members of the body, one to another. You have value.

Vs. 4: ...and to love their husbands, and their children;

Vs. 5: To be self-controlled, chaste, homemakers, good-natured (kind-hearted), adapting, and subordinating themselves to their husbands, that the word of God may not be exposed to reproach -blasphemed or discredited.

I want you to notice something in 1 Corinthians 12:12, which has something to do with marriage:

(1 Cor 12:12 KJV) For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.

"FOR THE BODY IS ONE." So when two people in the body of Christ get married, that does not exclude them from the body. They are members of the body of Christ, they are still in the body of Christ, and you are here to help them. When

you get married, you don't just move outside the body; you are a member of the body of Christ, married or unmarried.

We need to be conscious of this because if one member hurts, then we all hurt. When we can sit around and see marriages go down the tubes and not be touched by it, there is something wrong with us. When we can laugh or be lighthearted about a marriage that is breaking up, and not be moved with compassion and caring, there is something wrong with our relationship, because when one member mourns, we all mourn. Let's get that member, that marriage, working again so when they rejoice, we can rejoice with them.

If you were a Christian when you got married, you got married in Christ. If you got married outside of Christ and came into Christ, that brought your marriage into Christ. God is saying something to us that we need to understand. There are not many bodies of Christ; **THERE IS ONLY ONE BODY OF CHRIST**. There are many members in that ONE BODY, and those members that are married have hurts, they have wants, they have desires, they have needs, just as much as any other member in the body of Christ. When they hurt, we need to hurt with them.

I do not believe there is enough compassion in the body of Christ. We talk about the prisoners, and we talk about the lost, and we talk about those that need to be fed, and those that need to be clothed, but I want to tell you, charity starts at home. If the love of God is not manifested in the body of Christ, you are faking it out there. If you don't care about a member in the body of Christ hurting, you are not going to have compassion for the one out there; you entered into a religious work.

Just as the body is a unity, and yet has many parts, and all the parts, though many, form only one body, so it is with Christ the Messiah, the anointed one. There are two members in that marriage, but they are one, aren't they. They are one flesh. We that have been baptized into Christ are all one spirit; we have all been baptized into one body, one spirit. So when a marriage is going wrong in the body, don't pick sides. Start praying for it. Start loving both of those members in that marriage. Get down before God and find out what the hindering problem really is, so you can pray accordingly and not tell everybody in the congregation about it. Terrible things happen when you do that.

Now notice in Romans 12: 9-15 (KJV)

(Rom 12:9 KJV) Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.

(Rom 12:10 KJV) Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;

(Rom 12:11 KJV) Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;

(Rom 12:12 KJV) Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;

(Rom 12:13 KJV) Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.

(Rom 12:14 KJV) Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.

(Rom 12:15 KJV) Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

If a marriage is in trouble, there is a necessity in the saints. You might think necessity just means food and clothing. That is where the enemy blinds us. But when a marriage in the body of Christ is in trouble, there is a necessity for the body to become involved in prayer and fasting or whatever it takes, to break that hold that they have allowed Satan to have in their marriage. If you don't care about that, then you don't care about the body; and if you don't really care about the body, then you certainly don't care about Christ.

Let's look at it in the Amplified Bible:

Vs. 9: Let your love be sincere, a real thing; hate what is evil...

I want to tell you something: divorce is evil. I mean that. It may have happened to you in the past, but do everything in your power from now on to never let it happen again. Some of you could not help it. It was not your fault; it is just that is the way it worked, but it does not change God's heart. It should be in our heart to hate those things that God hates.

Vs. 9: ...loath all ungodliness, turn in horror from wickedness, but hold fast to that which is good.

Gen. 1:31 says that God looked at everything He created and He said it was good. God said it is not good for man that he should be alone, so He made for him a helpmeet called woman. He looked at man and woman, and He said it is good; and they two became one flesh. So if God said it is good, it is good. If God said it is bad, it is bad. There is no grey line with God. He doesn't say to us, "What do you think about this? Do you think maybe we ought to just shade it a little bit so we will not hurt anybody's feelings?" No! God said, "You minister the truth in love." I hurt for marriages that are hurting.

Vs. 10: Love one another with brotherly affection - as members of one family - giving precedence and showing honor to one another.

Vs. 11: Never lag in zeal and in earnest endeavor; be aglow and burning with the Spirit, serving the Lord.

Vs. 12: Rejoice and exult in hope; be steadfast and patient in suffering and tribulation; be constant in prayer.

Vs. 13: Contribute to the needs of God's people - sharing in the necessity of the saints - pursuing the practice of hospitality.

Vs. 14: Bless those who persecute you - who are cruel in their attitude toward you: bless and do not curse them.

Are you sure we really mean this? "Well my husband cursed me last night, and I am getting even. I am seeing the lawyer this afternoon." Now wait a minute, hold it. He said bless those that curse you. Do we exclude that from our marriage? It

is amazing how many people exclude the Word of God from their marriage when it does not please them. That mate that cursed you needs to be blessed. That mate that spitefully used you, needs to be prayed for.

Vs. 15: Share others joy, rejoicing with those who rejoice; and share others' grief, weeping with those who weep.

I don't know how we can make it any plainer. When there is a marriage in the body of Christ that is hurting, we need to weep before the Lord. We need to be touched by the feeling of their infirmities. We need to see the necessity that is in their marriage, and get in there and start seeking God to touch those lives. Don't give up! When there seems to be no hope, hope in hope.

Take Christ into your marriage; make Him the head of your marriage. Make Him that third cord in your marriage. Don't exclude Him by saying that applies to the church but it doesn't apply to my marriage. I have news for you: everything that applies to the body of Christ, does apply to your marriage. After all, what is a marriage? It is a mini-church, isn't it? Matt 18:20 says: "Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them." Matt 18:19 says: "If any two of you shall agree..." What greater opportunity and authority have any people in all the face of the earth to agree, than two that live together as one.

The church has to become aware of the erosion that is taking place in the body, because marriages are crumbling at an alarming rate each year! There is no stability in that. We cannot blame the schools, or the government, or television, or anything else. The blame has to come home where it belongs. It has to finally rest upon me as an individual, whether I have done everything that I could have done. There is a need for the body to identify with the hurting marriages and also the joyful.

If I were going to summarize the body's involvement with the hurting marriages in the body of Christ, it would simply be to become involved with them. To weep, to cry out to the Lord, to ask God for restoration of that marriage. We pray for the sinner, we pray for the prisoner, but how much time do we take to pray for the marriages in the body of Christ. What I would suggest that you do, is to make a list of married people that you know and lay your hands on that list every morning, whether their marriage is good or bad, and say, "Lord, I lift these marriages to you."

Can you imagine the power if we would do that? Every one of us knows different people. As a Christian, as a born-again saint of God, our duty is to hurt with those who are hurting, to rejoice with those that are rejoicing, and to weep with those that weep. The Word of God tells us that we are to pray one for another, that we may be healed (James 5:16).

Instead of concentrating on what is wrong with your marriage, begin to thank God for your marriage; and begin to pray for all the hurting marriages and all the marriages in the body of Christ that aren't hurting, that they become better. You may wake up surprised one morning. That partner may just say, "Hey, you know, I really do love you. I have thought it over, and I love you after all."

You see, we listen to all the outside words of men, when we ought to listen to the hidden man of the heart. We ought to listen to the Word of God and grow and be strong, and say "hey, this is worth saving, this is worth saving." We need to have the heart that cares. Amen!

THE FEAR OF GOD

Chapter 5

We need the fear of God in our marriages and in our personal lives. Without the fear of God, we do not really have much knowledge, understanding, or anything. We are going to look at 1 Corinthians 7:1-16, which I think is probably one of the most debated scripture contexts in the whole Bible about marriage, and yet it is very plain, very simple, and very outspoken of what pleases God.

(1 Cor 7:1 KJV) Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman.

(1 Cor 7:2 KJV) Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.

So there is more here than just saying, "Hey, I love you." This is to keep a man from fornication; but there has to be a responsibility on both parts to make that work. There has to be continually created in that marriage, a desire for one another. There has to be a woman that a man wants to be with, not someone he just married and she grew old on him and the fire went out.

(1 Cor 7:3 KJV) Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband.

It ought to be a benevolent working of God. We talk about benevolent societies, those that do good works. Let me tell you, a marriage ought to be a benevolent society. There ought to be a giving, a continual giving of self to one another. When one partner starts taking all the time instead of giving, it begins to decay; but when both partners contribute, it becomes strong and becomes benevolent.

(1 Cor 7:4 KJV) The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife.

In other words, we cannot defraud one another. It is not just how you feel. "I want to tell you, I'm cutting you off. I am going to deny you because you haven't treated me right." You have not denied that husband or wife as much as you have denied God. You don't belong to yourself. You belong to the one you gave yourself to, whether you're a husband or a wife. You are not to defraud one another. You are to share your whole being with that individual. Everything about one another in that marriage becomes a property of the other.

(1 Cor 7:5 KJV) Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.

Now don't just run off and become real super-spiritual and say, "Honey, this is it, I am going to fast and pray." Get consent. You see, that other person you are

married to is not a separate person living by themselves. That is a part of you, and that person needs to know they are needed in that marriage.

I think the worst thing a marriage can ever develop is an independence in each other. "I don't really need you; I am just allowing you to live with me." It is a wrong attitude. A benevolent attitude is, "I need you, honey, but I feel God is laying on my heart a need to fast and pray; but I want your consent to do it. Okay?" Then come together again that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.

Incontinency means lacking in restraint, especially over the sexual appetite. What is the need for there to be that actual loving development in your marriage? It is so that other person won't be tempted to the point where they give in to someone else. You may think you are strong, but your flesh is very strong, and all the wants and desires did not die when you got saved. You still have all the appetites and lusts that you ever had in your flesh, and the only way to control this one is by coming together. That is the only way you can control it, and don't try to make the Word of God a lie.

Don't become so super-spiritual that you think you are going to control your mates life by not giving them the due benevolence that is truly theirs. I'm giving you the Word of God. You can make up your mind what you want to do with it, but I'm going to tell you, if you listen to it and apply it, you can end up with a happy, blessed marriage. Or you can ignore it and end up with two people living in one house under the same roof and not even touching one another.

(1 Cor 7:6 KJV) But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment.

(1 Cor 7:7 KJV) For I would that all men were even as I myself (he is talking here by his own heart). But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that.

(1 Cor 7:8 KJV) I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I.

(1 Cor 7:9 KJV) But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn.

(1 Cor 7:10 KJV) And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband:

(1 Cor 7:11 KJV) But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife.

(1 Cor 7:12 KJV) 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.

(1 Cor 7:13 KJV) And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him.

(1 Cor 7:14 KJV) 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.

If one person in that marriage is a Christian, those children are holy unto God, they are sanctified. Isn't that something? "Well, I've got to leave that old man or that old gal, you know, so we can have holy children." NO!, If you are a holy vessel unto God, that offspring is already holy.

(1 Cor 7:15 KJV) But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace.

"Glory to God, I thought you were going to tell me I had to live with them." No, only if they want to. But if you have Christ living in your heart, and you really love and reach out in the love of God, that person only has two options: it is either stay or run. Darkness cannot stay with light very long unless it gets converted; but light doesn't have to run from the darkness. It can stay in that marriage, represent Christ, and have holy children. But if that person wants to leave, the word says, "Let him depart." Don't vote on it; you don't even need to get counsel on it. They split, and are gone; that is it!

Just take the Word of God and say, "Lord, this is my situation. I may be married to that unbeliever but I am going to pray for and love my partner. I am going to become the partner that I need to be, and whatever they do and however they react, Lord, that is your responsibility." Then if they leave, you do not have to feel guilty about it.

(1 Cor 7:16 KJV) For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?

In these verses, we have listed these things for you: #1 -To avoid fornication. #2 -To render due benevolence to wife or husband. #3 -To recognize each other's needs. #4 -Defraud not one another. #5 -Mutual consent to abstain. #6 -Better to marry than burn. #7 -Let not wife depart from her husband. #8 -Separated must remain unmarried or reconcile the same husband. #9 -Unbelieving partner has right to remain. #10 -Sanctification comes on unbeliever because of the believer. #11 -Let the unbeliever depart if they really desire to do so, there is no bondage. #12 -Possible salvation through believer. #13 -Children are clean because one partner is a believer.

If you have trouble receiving these scriptures, look at 2 Timothy 3:16-17 again:

(2 Tim 3:16 KJV) All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

(2 Tim 3:17 KJV) That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

Paul never blames God for everything though. Look at 1 Cor. 7:39-40:

(1 Cor 7:39 KJV) The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord.

(1 Cor 7:40 KJV) But she is happier if she so abide, after my judgment: and I think also that I have the Spirit of God.

We would just jump up and say, "Thus saith the Lord." We don't know if it is God's mind or ours, we just feel like saying it. When we counsel people we add volumes that do not exist in the Word of God, never realizing that one day we must stand before God and give an account for all the volumes of counsel we have given. Paul was very careful because he was dealing with the most sacred union that could be made upon the face of the earth. Jesus and his disciples were invited to a marriage in Cana of Galilee, and the first miracle Jesus performed was at this wedding, when he turned the water into wine (John 2:11). Marriage in the sight of God is very precious.

Many times in our zeal, and in what we call "love," which really turned out to be lust, we married somebody. We loved the Lord, and we planned on being married to that individual the rest of our life, but something went wrong. That partner split. That does not free me from the obligation of being everything God told me to be while that marriage existed. God wants us to realize how serious it really is to move in the Spirit of the Lord.

(Hebrews 13:4 KJV) Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.

The Amp Bible says: *Let marriage be held in honor - esteemed worthy, precious, {that is} of great price and especially dear - in all things. And thus let the marriage bed be (kept undishonored,) undefiled; for God will judge and punish the unchaste (all guilty of sexual vice) and adulterous.*

It is not the church's job to go around judging whoremongers and adulterers. That is God's job. Our job is to work in such a way that the marriages can stay undefiled. We must pray and seek God for our brothers and sisters that are in the Lord, and are married. But what we do is turn it around the other way. We don't care what is going on in the marriages, we think we have to judge those adulterers, and those whoremongers. We have to bring fire down on their heads. Right? Wrong! That is not our job. That is God's job. Amen! Let's concentrate on what our job is. Our job is to keep that marriage undefiled. Our job is to keep that marriage pure and clean. Our job is to keep that marriage honest before God.

"Well, Brother Krider, you don't understand, I...." No, I do understand. The Word of God is true. Romans 3:4 says, "*Let God be true, but every man a liar,*" if that

is what it takes. But isn't it true the church has gotten involved in judging everybody in the world, instead of concentrating on ministering to the individual need of a marriage. We've gotten so conscious of winning the world for Christ, we have lost total, absolute consciousness of putting the marriages in the body of Christ together.

We have to rethink; we have to start thinking like God would think. God wants us to start first of all as an individual, then as a marriage, then as a family, and when you get that solid base, then start reaching out. There is no need to go out and win the world if you lose your children and lose your family. There are going to be times when there are going to be divorces that happen, and you have no power or authority over those crazy things. It just happens, but the tragic thing is that people do choose sides.

If you want to bring dissension to the body of Christ, have a couple that is having a bad time and they both start telling their side of it to different people in the congregation. Pretty soon you have his friends against her friends and her friends against his friends. Now if you get four or five of those in the church, you really have a problem, because where confusion is, there is every evil work.

(James 3:16 KJV) For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.

(James 3:17 KJV) But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

(James 3:18 KJV) And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.

I don't care how anointed a preacher or teacher is, if the Word of God just stays within the four walls of the church, it is not going to do any good. If we do not take heed to it and begin to live it, the church is not going to prosper and be blessed. There are couples in the church that are at the verge of total annihilation, and we do not take the time to care. Look what Jesus says about divorce:

(Mat 5:31 KJV) It hath been said, whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement.

(Mat 5:32 KJV) But I say unto you, whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causes her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.

(Mat 19:3 KJV) The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?

(Mat 19:4 KJV) And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female,

(Mat 19:5 KJV) And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?

(Mat 19:6 KJV) Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

(Mat 19:7 KJV) They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?

(Mat 19:8 KJV) He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.

(Mat 19:9 KJV) And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.

Notice what Jesus is saying here. Their hearts had become so hardened, they were not following God. They could care less about God, so God finally turned them over, and said, "All right, Moses, tell them they can go ahead and do it, because their hearts are hardened toward Me. At least give her, her freedom." Isn't that something? You see, unless our hearts are tender before God, we will write off what we want to write off and take to ourselves what we want to take to ourselves. But if our heart is tender before God, we are going to listen to every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. We are not going to judge it good or bad. We are going to say, "That is the Word of the Lord. I will obey it!" When Paul wrote 1 Cor. 7th chapter, he did not do away with what Jesus was saying.

Now, you men, think about this: if you are thinking about putting away your wife, you're in double trouble. You have caused two people to sin. You have caused her to sin and you have caused the man that marries her to sin. You see, divorce does not stop with two people. Unfortunately it never does. When two Christians get divorced, it is a horrible thing. God hates it. The world does it because that is the custom of the world. The world makes a commitment to stay married as long as it feels good, as long as it profits me, as long as it pleases me, but the minute it begins to be a burden or I have to work at it, forget it. I am getting rid of it!

That has crept into the church and men are putting their wives away and they are Christians! God said, "Don't you know what you are doing? You are causing that woman to sin if she marries again, and you are causing that man to sin that marries her." Now that is not the same as an unbeliever departing. That woman can marry again or that man can marry again because they are not under bondage. But He is talking about a willful act of the believer putting away a partner. Paul said, "If the unbeliever desires to stay, let him stay."

I don't think God ever put a shotgun to any man's head and said, "You have to marry that gal." Isn't it funny how we pick out the one we are going to marry and then we change our mind about that. We never read these scriptures. We go on like we are blameless. That is not what Jesus taught. Jesus taught truth. He taught the Word of God. You say, "Well, Brother Krider, I have another translation that makes it a little better." I don't care how many translations you have, the Word of God still stands sure.

We need to have the fear of God in our marriage. I have had people say to me, "My husband wants me to divorce him so he will be free and not guilty." If you've ever counseled very long in marriages, you are going to find that to be true. "He wants me to divorce him so I will be guilty." They know in their heart, don't they, that if I do it then I am guilty, but if the other partner does it, I am free. No, you are not, because in your heart you have already divorced them. In your heart, you have already transgressed against them. In your heart, you have already put them away. Look at the following scriptures again:

Mat 19:5 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh. So then they are no more twain but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

Mat 19:9 Whosoever shall put away his wife and marry another committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband and be married to another, she committeth adultery.

So the only way out friends, is that the unbeliever has to go. What this does for me is that it puts a fear of God in my heart so when I counsel you, or anybody else, I am going to take you to the Word of God and let you make up your mind. I am not going to try to make up your mind for you. You see, a counselor does not take sides; a counselor represents the one that he is sent to counsel. His authority is behind that counsel. When we counsel, we must counsel the Word of God and let it fall where it falls, let it cut where it cuts, and let it heal where it heals.

I love Jesus because He said, "I'll tell you how it is, disciples; this is just the way it works." Somehow, the modern thinking is, "Jesus did not really mean what He said. We are more educated, so when Jesus taught on marriage, He was teaching an antiquated theory." The fear of God needs to work in our marriages. You need to say, "Honey, I am not leaving you. I am going to stick closer to you, as close to you as a fly and molasses. I'm sticking. You're stuck with me, and where you go, I'm going. I'm yours and you are mine, and we are stuck together!" That ought to be your attitude.

Now if that husband or that wife wants to run away and leave you, that is up to them; but don't be the guilty party to initiate that because you are going to suffer all of your life for it. I am telling you the truth. The Word is just hard to swallow, but the thing about the Word is that it will heal you. If the fear of God operates in our marriages, it is not long until maybe love will begin to operate there with it, when we quit blaming one another for our short-comings.

When the body of Christ begins to be involved with the marriages, and caring and weeping and hurting when someone is hurting in a marriage, and crying out to God and interceding for that marriage, something wonderful will take place.

Now notice this in Luke 16:18:

(Luke 16:18 KJV) Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery.

Thank God that He made a way. I tell people everywhere, "I don't care if you have been married 15 times, this should be the last one." You might have been ignorant before, but you are not ignorant anymore. "Well, I was thinking about getting rid of her last night, but now I don't think I will." "I was thinking about shipping him out last week, but now I can't."

The fear of God won't allow you to do just anything you want to do. The fear of God brings you into line with God's Word and the love for God's Word causes you to grow into what God wants you to be. Don't pray God to bail you out, but the strength to stick it out. Quit looking for ways out of a situation that you have created. Don't pray your way out but through.

"Oh, God, get me out of this mess." God said, "I did not get you in this mess. Line up with My Word and we will change this mess into a bless." Quit taking everything that is happening to you in your situation and saying, "Well, it's God's fault, it's the devil, it's my wife, it's my husband." No matter what the turmoil or the situation is in your life, you can line up with God's Word; you can become content in that situation and you can bless God through whatever is going on. When we start living by God's Word, freedom comes.

You have a choice. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty (2 Cor 3:17). The Spirit of the Lord lives in us, doesn't He. That word liberty means the power of choice. As we begin to allow that to operate in our heart, we realize: "I am making the choices, and I am becoming the accumulation of all of my choices, and that is what I am today. If I choose to love, I will love. If I choose to bless, I will bless. If I choose to hate, I will hate. If I choose to curse, I will curse."

Now let me say this to you: you don't fall in love. You fall in lust, you fall in a lot of things, but you don't fall in love. You grow in love. That situation that may seem so uncomely at this time, can become the very place where the love of God can begin to grow in your heart. You older people need to take your rightful place and responsibility that God will hold you accountable for, and that is to begin to strengthen the marriages in the body of Christ. The fruit of a marriage falling apart is nothing short of disaster after disaster.

I have the power to make choices in my life. I can choose to love my wife, I can choose to like my wife, I can choose to hate my wife, I can choose to bless my wife, or I can choose to curse my wife. Nobody can make me do it, but I will do what I choose to do. What I desire to do is what I am going to do.

I want to challenge everyone of you that are Christians, to become involved with the marriages in the body of Christ. Don't pick sides. Stand where Christ would stand in that marriage. Pray as Christ would pray. Speak the words that Christ would give you, and stand there and watch the salvation of the Lord. Don't contribute to the downfall of someone's marriage by jumping into it and taking sides, because you are guilty to contributing to that fall. When I stand before God, I would

rather it be said of me that I helped to build 10 strong marriages, than to have to stand before God and have Him say that I destroyed over 100. I want to stand before God with clean hands and a pure heart.

If you have a problem in your marriage, work with your wife or your husband. Be honest with one another. Be open with one another. Share with one another. And then if you need to, go to a godly man or godly woman that is not going to choose your side. Our problem is that when we want counsel, we want what we want to hear. Isn't that true? We want somebody that is going to agree with us. We don't want somebody that is going to tell us we are wrong.

If someone comes to us for counsel, we need to let that person know, because it did happen to them, because they were divorced, or because it happened in their life, that we do not despise them; that we are not better than them. They are just as good and God has the same call in their life as He ever had. There is nothing worse than putting down people that have had something happen within their lives, because then you are going to stand one day and watch the same thing overtake you and try you.

(Mat 7:1 KJV) Judge not, that ye be not judged.

(Mat 7:2 KJV) For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

So it behooves us as Christians, to realize that marriage is in the body, and we need to take care of those members in the body. That is the necessity of the saints.

We need, as married partners together, to begin to work it together. Don't go out and seek all the advice that you can get from everybody in the country. Seek the Lord. Pray for your partner. If they have cursed you, bless them. If they spitefully use you, pray for them. It is funny how we can seem to pray for everybody else that has come against us, but the Bible even says, "Love your enemies." If you think that husband or that wife is an enemy, love them.

I believe that every time we have heard this Word of God, it makes us take a new look at our partner. It does not necessarily change the partner, but it changes me; and maybe my partner doesn't need changing. Maybe the one that needs changing is me, until finally I can see through the eyes of Jesus and I can see the real need in my partner's life. If they are cursing me, my need it not to turn and curse them again, but to bless them. If they hate me, it is not for me to hate them again, but to love them. And if they spitefully use me, it is not up to me to spitefully use them, but to pray for them.

How many marriages do you think would be healed if there were not two people arguing and fighting? What do you think would happen if one of those partners earnestly and sincerely sought the Lord, not to react as their human nature would speak to them, but to react as Christ would react? How many marriages do you think would end up in divorce in the church if we did that? Very few! There would be marriages that would be a single partner in that marriage, because the unbeliever would depart, but that other partner could be guiltless. That other

partner could stand one day before the Lord blameless for their part in that marriage.

I don't think I can impress on you enough, the need for us to become involved in one another's lives, in one another's marriages. We need to take it very seriously when we hear the disturbing news that there is a family that is coming apart at the seams and Mom and Dad are thinking about splitting. It wouldn't be to take sides in that marriage; it would be to lay before the Lord and say, "God, oh God! Oh Lord, we beseech heaven and earth, that You would move upon their hearts and their lives."

Let me give you this one example. There is a young couple that I have known for years, and they are very dear to my heart. One day the wife decided when she went to work, that she wouldn't come home anymore. She sent a message through a friend and told her husband, "I'm not coming back. You and the children are not in my life anymore. I found someone else." He is a Christian and she was a Christian, but the advice that he had received from loved ones was: "Protect yourself; get a divorce or she is going to end up getting everything." The folks that gave this counsel were Christians also, but all they could see was protecting their child. Protecting his stuff.

A few days later he asked me to have coffee with him. We spent about an hour together and he told me what had happened to him. He said, "I'm at fault also. I have not been the kind of husband that I really needed to be, but I never dreamed this would ever happen to me. Here is the advice that I have received, but what do you think I ought to do?" I said, "Absolutely nothing. Love her and pray for her and let God do the work."

Later I got a phone call in my office. His wife suddenly desired to come home. She repented and said she was wrong. Today he says their marriage is better than it was when it first began. The children have their Mom and Dad. He could have taken the advice that sounded right to the natural man, but when you hear what God says, and you act upon the Word of God, I can guarantee you that God will be glorified and things will work much differently than you suppose they will. They will work to the glory of God and you will have peace in your heart.

Let's become ambassadors for Christ, even in the body of Christ, to help, to strengthen marriages, to draw alongside of them, encourage them, and say, "Hey, wait a minute, let God take over. You do what God tells you to do. Love them. Pray for them. Let God change them. You let God work it out, because that which is impossible with man, becomes possible with God."

If you're having problems in your marriage, I don't want you to think about that right now. I want you to think about someone else. I am sure that every one of us knows somebody else who is having a problem. I want you to bow your heads and close your eyes and we are going to pray for those marriages right now. As we pray for those marriages, you may be having problems in yours, but God is going to take care of it for you.

Father, in the wonderful name of Jesus, we stand together, and we have drawn the line. No longer will we become complacent. When marriages begin to come apart, we will begin to pray and intercede. We will begin to stand against the wiles of

the devil. We will begin to minister love and reconciliation. We refuse to take sides. We will stand with You, Lord. We will declare the counsel of God.

Lord, we bring troubled marriages to You. We bring broken marriages to you. We bring those marriages that seem there is nothing possible that can be done. We bring them to You right now. Father, we are asking You to move upon the hearts of those two partners. Let their love be turned toward one another. Let a miraculous power of God drive out every ounce of darkness. Lord, drive out every unclean spirit. Drive out every power that has tried to invade and separate those marriages, and we speak reconciliation. We speak healing in those marriages. We speak unity and desire for one another.

Lord, we thank You because there is nothing impossible with You. We are not going to be limited anymore by what we see. We are not going to be limited by what we hear. We are not going to be limited by the reasoning of men, but we are going to take our place to stand for one another; to stand for those marriages.

God, I pray for those who are studying this course, and need help in their marriages. Those that are representing their husbands or their wives, I pray that new vision of heart will be given them to see one another in a new light, even as You see that individual. If they are being cursed, they will turn and bless, and if they are being persecuted, they will pray. If they are being hated, they will love. That soft answer turns away wrath. These precious sisters can see their husbands won to you without preaching to them. These men can see their wives brought into a right relationship with their husbands by living godly, and loving and sharing and giving and caring. Father, I ask you to bless these marriages.

God, let us become good counselors. Let us become encouragers. Let us become those that hold marriage in a high esteem, in the same light that You hold it. Help us to mourn with those who mourn. Help us to reach out until they rejoice, that we might rejoice with them.

Paul said that he was pure from the blood of all men for he had shunned not to declare the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:26-27). Father, I believe to the best of the ability You have given me, that I have spoken the words that You have put into my mouth. My prayer is that the words that have been spoken by You, by the Spirit of God, will find good lodging ground in our hearts and will bring hope and faith. Cause us no longer to think about destruction in our marriages but begin to believe for victory; begin to live our part and begin to work in that area of responsibility that You have given us. For it is plain, it is clear, and it is written. In the mighty name of Jesus! Amen!