



Keys to a Wonderful, Loving, Life-Long Marriage

If as you read this, you think, “There is no way – we could never have this kind of marriage!” Be aware: One step in the right direction is a better marriage, people who run marathons start with the first step, and the Sovereign God of the universe wants to make this happen.

The Meaning of Life

We were created by God to have a wonderful, loving and everlasting relationship with Him. This is the meaning of life—why we exist—to become members of the family of God! He has provided three major tools for achieving this goal (in addition to His death on the Cross): the Bible, the Church and the family.

The Purpose of the Family

This means that the family exists for the purpose of leading us into a loving relationship with our Creator. *Family relationships are, therefore, intended to be the most beautiful, the most blessed, the most wonderful relationships to exist in God’s created world.* If you—as husband and wife—will truly conduct your lives and your relationship together according to God’s will, *you can have this kind of marriage.* Many marriages fail and many more are less than wonderful, but you don’t have to settle for anything less than all that God intends! You must, however, do it His way, according to His Word, according to His will. (This means that you have to stay off the throne, which belongs to God!) It won’t always be easy—all marriages have challenges—but with God’s help and guidance, a wonderful marriage is completely attainable and incredibly worth it.

The Plan

God created the family to be a model of the relationship He wants to have with us, as well as a tool for making it happen. He has, therefore, established the order of the family—as well as the rules governing it—in order to facilitate this. Parents are to love, teach and discipline their children, raising them for God. Children are to love, trust, respect and obey an earthly father (and mother) and then transfer all of this to God—our Heavenly Father. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loves the Church—enough to daily sacrifice his life for her. A wife is to respect and submit to her husband as the head of the family—as Christians are to respect and submit to Christ as the head of the Church. When this all works the way it is supposed to, the family becomes a beautiful (although

not perfect) model of God's relationship with us. As a result, the people in it, as well as the people watching, are inspired to grow closer to God.

For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church-- for we are members of his body. "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." This is a profound mystery--but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband Ephesians 5:23-33

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

Husbands are not superior to or more important than their wives, and a husband should never disrespect or be mean to his wife. Jesus would never do this to His bride—the church. God simply made husbands and wives to fulfill different roles. (On a football team, the Quarter Back calls the plays, not because he is superior, but because of his perspective).

God puts husbands and wives together to compliment each other in the running of the family. The husband has knowledge and perspective which his wife doesn't have and the wife has knowledge and perspective which her husband doesn't have. The husband is responsible—*before God*—for making important family decisions based upon the combined knowledge and perspectives of both (filtered, through the Word of God). The wife has the responsibility of following his lead.

Successful teams working towards the same goals don't spend a lot of time in conflict. My wife and I have been in total disagreement with each other - only one time in twenty-seven years - regarding an important family decision. I made the decision, and she later told me that I had made the right one.

A Christian wife almost always fulfills her role when her Christian husband fulfills his.

Husbands are to submit to all the authorities that God has put above him and wives and children are to submit to all the authorities that God has put above them. Nobody, however, is required to submit, when submission requires doing something which is out of the will of God.

FYI = Jesus—the sovereign, omnipotent, eternal God of the universe—even submitted Himself to Joseph and Mary—sinful, fallible human beings—because it was right. (See Luke 2:51)

The husband / father is the spiritual leader of the home. He is to lead his family in prayer, take them with him to a good Bible teaching church on a regular basis, and be the leader in teaching the children the Word of God. If he doesn't lead, they won't follow. (If you don't teach your children, Satan and the world will. If you need inspiration, picture your family destroyed and your children burning in hell.)

The Method

Be equally yoked—Christian with Christian. Do not even consider idolatry—being your own god, doing things your own way, disobeying your Creator, marrying a non-Christian—thinking that you will bring a future spouse to Jesus. Simply *considering* such an idolatrous act is compromising your obedience, and sinning against God is a poor way to lead someone to salvation.

Do not think that two different people, going two different directions, under the control of two different (warring) masters, can live in harmony together for an extended length of time. If a spouse does not accept Jesus and you add children to the mix, the stakes, the battle, and the pain will increase greatly.

We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.

1 John 5:19

Also, make sure your future spouse is truly a Christ follower—not just says that he (she) is. Be a fruit inspector.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.
Galatians 5:22-23

Be in an ever growing relationship with God! If you don't have this, good luck on the rest (and there is no such thing as luck).

Marriage has been described as a triangle, with the husband and wife on the bottom corners and God at the top. As the husband and wife move closer to God, they get closer to each other.

One survey showed that out of 1,000 marriages in the United States, approximately this many will fail.

When the husband and wife lived together before marriage. = 800

When the people were married by a Justice of the Peace. = 600

When the people were married in a church. = 400

When the husband and wife read the Bible and pray together daily. = 1

Do not marry too young. Make sure both parties are spiritually, emotionally, socially, and financially mature enough to be married. (P.S. Maturing should be intentional before and after the wedding, and marriage helps us to grow up.)

Some couples who were right for each other have had a harder time because they were not ready for each other.

The concept of “divorce” is non-existent in your existence.

Marriage is a covenant (an agreement) with the Almighty Creator, Sovereign Lord and Eternal Judge of the Universe—in which two people become one flesh. This is a supernatural bonding of souls—this ability created by our all wise, powerful and loving God—through the coming together of flesh. Marriage is immeasurably more than an

agreement between two people, supported by a legal contract. It is a sacred and holy relationship which has been created by and touches Heaven. It is *commanded*, therefore, that no person should ever break up a marriage. (Any thinking person should be terrified of breaking, or of aiding in the breaking of this *covenant of God*, as well as of the incredible damage which it would cause.)

Since you are married for life—out of obedience to God—you will be willing to let God help you work through *the multitude of challenges which are going to come at you* throughout your marriage, enabling God, therefore, to make your marriage a beautiful thing. .

Couples who get divorced have all the same problems as couples who work it out.

One survey showed that *most* people who described their marriages as “unhappy” or “very unhappy”—but stayed together—described them as “happy” or “very happy” five years later.

Understand that ‘family’ is the hardest, yet most wonderful and rewarding job you will ever do, (most wonderful and rewarding if you do it according to God’s will and with His help). For one thing, the differences that attract you to each other will, at times, irritate you. Be aware, however, that God uses opposites to shape us into the humble and loving people He wants us to be. In humility, admit when you are wrong and be quick to apologize—to God, each other and to your children—every time it happens.

Note to engaged couples and newlyweds: The ‘honeymoon high’ usually lasts from six months to two years. Love can grow for a lifetime.

Marriage is not an achievement, it is a never ending process of learning to love and live together.

People respect and care more about things they have to work for—to obtain or maintain—than things which are free and/or easy. (The grass is always greener where you water it.)

Affirm one another and never attack each other’s character. Look for the good things—especially character qualities—in your spouse (and children) and seek opportunities to affirm them for these attributes. Also, do not ever attack each other’s character. You can say “You hurt me.” or you can say “This makes me angry,” but don’t say, “You are - - - !” or “You always - - -”. Set loving boundaries and do not ever cross them.

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. Ephesians 4:29

Understand that you cannot change each other, so don’t try. Be the person God wants you to be and leave the changing to Him. You can ask God to change your spouse, but be aware that He usually ends up changing the one asking first, then ultimately, the other one through them.

Forgive ceaselessly. You are going to hurt each other and be hurt by each other, so forgive every time it happens and do it before the sun goes down.

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.
Ephesians 4:32

"In your anger do not sin" Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.
Ephesians 4:26-27

You are number three! God is the most important person in your existence. Your spouse is number two. You are number three. When you have children, you are number four, five or six. (Loving brings more joy and contentment than selfishness ever could.)

Marriage is not 50% - 50%—it's Love one another as God has loved you!

Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave--just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."
Matthew 20:26-28

Your highest goal for your spouse and your children (as well as for you) should be—that you will each hear God say, “Well done my good and faithful servant.” This should be the guiding force and philosophy in your relating to your spouse and kids if you have them.

Prioritize your time, talents and energy according to what is important. God and family get both quantity time and quality time! Overly lofty career goals, possessions, friends, hobbies, etc. may need to be cut back, and in some cases omitted completely. When we stand before God, we are going to discuss how we lived with our families and raised our children. He is not going to ask about the temporal titles we had, the fun things we did, or the stuff we left behind. God has given us enough time to accomplish everything He wants us to do.

Surround and immerse yourselves in Biblical teaching continually. Read the Bible, get it on audio, listen to Christian radio—often! God's greatest commands are to “love,” and His Word has everything to do with this—teaching us what love is, commanding us to do it, and showing us how to get His help.

Listening to Christian radio, I often hear three or more programs a day on how to love my spouse and family (and others). My life and my marriage are immensely better because of my continual immersion in God's Word. Do not make the dreadful mistake of limiting God to Sunday mornings.

Pray! Pray with each other. Pray for each other. Pray that God will help you to love each other. You can even ask Him to help you to ‘*want*’ to love each other. This is His plan for our families and He wants us asking for His guidance and for His help continually, and He's eager to give it—continually. Families cannot do this alone!



Keep the lines of communication open. Don't take communication for granted and don't let it slip away. Spend time with each other and don't lose the communication you had when you were first infatuated with each other.

Leave father and mother and be united to your spouse. This means cutting the apron strings, the emotional strings, the financial strings, and any other strings that would keep you and your spouse from being the autonomous—except from God—family that He wants you to be. This doesn't mean that you should disassociate from your parents or that you never ask for your parent's help or guidance. It means that you do not live with a continuing dependency upon them, and that they are not prescribed any authority over your relationship.

Find some mentors. Find a Christian couple with a long and successful marriage—to learn from and to be around. Be bold, ask someone! If you don't know anyone, ask your church. They may also want to start a mentoring program.

Be ever aware that we are in a war, and that the *family*—one of God's three major tools for bringing the world to salvation—is naturally, one of Satan's three major targets picked for destruction. Pray continually for God's protection and guidance for your family and remember that Satan is the enemy, not your spouse!

Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. Ephesians 6:11

Watch what you watch, and what you listen too. Satan has a major arsenal in the form of audio and visual entertainment aimed at destroying lives and families. His attacks are designed not only to deceive people into believing lies, but to slowly condition us into destruction.

How much entertainment is being produced which promotes disrespect for husbands / fathers? Remember, Satan's goal is to destroy the relationship with an earthly husband / father, because of the association of the relationship with a Heavenly Father.

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Philippians 4:8

Money is managed by the team. There is no “Your money and My money.” It is God's money and you are a one-flesh steward of it. Someone, however, needs to be responsible for writing the checks.

Tithe 10%, save 10%, spend the rest of God's money in whatever ways would please Him. And, remember, He gives us money to enjoy, not to destroy.

Sex is a precious gift from God to husband and wife. God created physical intimacy, not only for pro-creation, but as a physical and emotional blessing to marriage which helps bond two souls together. It is to be holy, blessed and fun. Husbands and wives belong to each other; their bodies belong to each other, their souls belong to each other and they have a duty to each other. So, love each other, respect each other, learn about each other (which requires teaching each other) and bless each other. [FYI = Husbands are visual, wives are emotional. Husbands think physical, wives think relational. Husbands are microwave ovens, wives are crock pots. Husbands are goal oriented, wives are process oriented. Husbands can compartmentalize their lives and thinking, wives have one big container where everything is mixed.]

The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. The wife's body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife. Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. 1 Corinthians 7.3-5

The way our society uses sex today is like using a Rolls Royce to haul trash.

Avoid addictions and run from temptation. Addictions are destroying millions of people and their families—slowly, cruelly and painfully—alcohol, drugs, pornography, gambling, entertainment, etc. (If you laughed at ‘entertainment,’ there are countless numbers of wives and children, dying for a husband’s / dad’s attention, who are not laughing with you.) If you have an addiction, go to God for help—and to a Christian ministry involved in this kind of service!

Things to discuss, just the three of you; husband, wife and God.

Do you want children and if so, how many?

Children are a gift from God. Treat them like it! Love them with all your heart. And remember, your ultimate goal is not to raise children, but rather, adults.

Sons are a heritage from the LORD, children a reward from him. Psalm 127:3

When do you want to start having children? (FYI = Establishing a career before having a family has put some women past their particular child bearing age).

How will you educate your children?

We home-schooled our children and I would highly recommend this to any family who is able. You will, of course, need God’s guidance on this, and if He says yes, you will need a whole lot of His help. There are also a growing number of Christian schools. [God will provide for anything He calls you to do.]

How will you discipline your children?

If you love your children, you will discipline them. If you don’t discipline them, you will destroy them. Discipline is love, so discipline in love! Discipline only while you are under control—without anger, shouting, shaming, comparing, fault

finding—and make sure your children understand what they did wrong and that you disciplined them because you love them. (We parents sometimes need a ‘time out’ before disciplining our children, to get ourselves under control). All children are different and respond differently to different discipline methods. ***There is a world of difference between discipline and child abuse.*** (Disciplining my children always hurt me worse than it hurt them; and it should have!) Dad and mom always present a united front.

He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him.
Proverbs 13:24

Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you punish him with the rod, he will not die. Punish him with the rod and save his soul from death.
Proverbs 23:13,14

Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged. Colossians 3:21

How and where will you spend holidays?

Who does which chores—cleaning, mowing, shopping, paying bills, home repairs, trash, putting gas in the car, laundry, etc.?

A stay at home mom with young children, or a home schooling-mom, sometimes has a much harder job than a person with a career and her day doesn’t end at 5:00 or 6:00. She needs help when her husband gets home from work. A husband, however, may need a while to relax and transition before being handed a child.

