

SPIRIT of REVIVAL

LIFE ACTION MINISTRIES

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**"If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?"
(Psalm 11:3)**

FROM THE DIRECTOR . . .



My heart sank as I listened to the words that had become so familiar in recent months. Like so many others who had come, the preacher who sat across the room from me seemed to have it made. He was gifted, popular, and successful, as most of us measure success. But he had failed at the one earthly relationship that matters most—his relationship with his wife.

I mentally added one more marriage to the pile of human debris that is multiplying faster than all our combined efforts to contain it.

Included in the fallout of the past year alone, have been prominent evangelists, pastors, and Christian educators. Some I have met with have been married for decades; in one case the marriage lasted only three weeks.

All too often, the hardness of heart that leads to the breaking of the marriage vow, has stripped these men and women of any desire they may once have had to yield to the Lordship of Christ and the authority of Scripture.

The inevitable scars left by sin and selfishness are painful beyond description. None escapes unscathed from the breakup of a marriage. I have listened to the anguished cries

of guilt, remorse, frustration, anger, resentment, and hopelessness, until I thought my own heart would break.

The rate at which Christian marriages are falling apart has reached staggering, epidemic proportions. Feeling helpless in the face of a crisis of such dimensions, and lacking biblically-based convictions, many believers have resorted to man-centered, emotional responses and solutions to the tidal wave of divorce in the church.

But the grim statistics suggest that these efforts have failed to produce any real, lasting help, or to stem the tide of rampant divorce.

In our desire to extend God's mercy and grace to hurting, fallen people, we seem to have lost sight of the absolute, unchanging standards of a holy God.

In some of the harshest language of Scripture, God accused the ancient Israelites of dealing treacherously by divorcing their wives. When the ancient Israelites inquired as to why God did not respond to their prayers and sacrifices, God pointed to the widely accepted practice of divorce, calling it an abomination. Is the widespread divorce in our churches today any less of a curse?

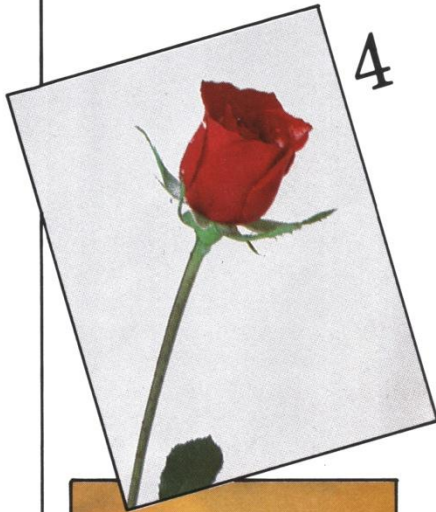
It is easy to become accustomed and immune to the thud of broken marriages crashing around us. But I have a growing conviction that God will not heed our pleas for revival, no matter how sincere or fervent they may be, until we restore His standard of the permanence of marriage.

This special edition of Spirit of Revival makes a fervent appeal to God's people to develop and uphold biblical convictions regarding marriage, divorce, and remarriage.

The all-out war that Satan has launched on the Christian home, calls for the active participation of every child of God. We must compassionately tend to the wounded, recognizing that the help and hope they so desperately need are only to be found in full surrender to God's truth. We must defend and safeguard our own homes with firm, biblical convictions. And we must reproduce those convictions in the lives of others while there is still time.

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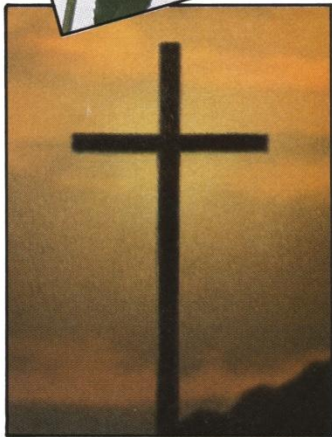
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Life Action Ministries does not necessarily endorse the entire philosophy and ministry of all its contributing writers. However, in each edition of **Spirit of Revival** we offer writings that are consistent with the biblical philosophy of ministry to which Life Action is committed.

An appeal to return to God's plan for marriage

“WHAT GOD HATH JOINED”

by Del Fehsenfeld Jr.

SPECIAL FEATURE

The Crisis in the Home

As an increasing number of Christian marriages are failing, pastors and lay people are asking what the Bible has to say about marriage, divorce, and remarriage. In a special feature, Del Fehsenfeld Jr. addresses the crisis in the home, and examines the biblical teaching on this crucial matter.

More than one million divorces will split American households this year.

At least 40 percent of all married couples will eventually divorce.

The rapid increase in present day divorce statistics should not surprise us. Indeed, the New Testament writers prophesied of the deterioration of moral standards in the last days.

What ought to surprise us, however, is the way in which the church seems to be following the trend of the world. Twenty years ago a prominent evangelist pointed out that, although two out of every five marriages were being broken by divorce nationally, the ratio in "church-related" families was one to 4,000. If we were to make the same survey in our Bible-believing churches today, we would be shocked at the figures. I frequently preach in fundamental churches where fewer than half of the couples are married to their original partner.

This rise in divorce and remarriage in the church has sparked intense theological controversy. Unfortunately, I believe there has been an alarming tendency to approach the Scripture and to change views, based on emotional or personal considerations. One conservative pastor frankly admitted that the overwhelming number of divorced and remarried couples in his church had in large measure determined his own pragmatic position on these issues.

We must not give in to the temptation to develop a theology that is compatible with our experience. Neither should we interpret Scripture to justify our own preconceived conclusions. The clear teaching of Scripture must be placed far above all of the opinions and writings of mere men. The question is not, "What does so-and-so say?" but "What is the will and heart of God?"

Some years ago, I committed myself to a careful study of the teaching of God's Word on divorce and remarriage. As I fasted and prayed and sought the mind of God, He kept driving me back to certain indisputable truths. Since that time, as we have applied these truths in our counseling ministry, we have seen literally hundreds of "hopeless" marriages reconciled. Others, who have already been divorced and remarried, have been released from guilt and set free for fruitful ministry.

I do not offer these thoughts as the final word on the subject. Only God's Word is final. I simply desire to share my heart and understanding on this critically important subject. I realize that there are godly men who share my commitment to the Word of God and the permanence of marriage, though they would not agree with every conclusion.

My purpose in writing is not to spark further controversy, but to encourage you to seriously evaluate the evidence of God's Word and to draw biblical conclusions under the leadership of His Spirit.

Marriage Is Permanent and Not to Be Put Apart

Any discussion of divorce must begin with the clear teaching of Scripture that marriage was designed by God to be permanent and not to be put apart by any man.

God's original pattern for marriage requires that one "cleave" to his partner (Genesis 2:24). This word means "to cling, to adhere, to abide fast by." It means to cement together—to stick like glue—to be welded together so that the two cannot be separated without damage to both. There is no question that God intended marriage to be a permanent, life-long bond and commitment between a man and a woman. In fact, at the point of marriage, God declares the man and woman to be permanently united together as "one flesh." This is a physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual oneness.

In the New Testament, Jesus affirmed God's plan for marriage by repeating the statement of Genesis 2:24. He further emphasized the permanence of marriage by adding, "...What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matthew 19:6).

The apostles held to the teaching of Jesus and were inspired by the Holy Spirit to lift high the standard of the permanence of marriage. Paul set forth the general principle: "And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband" (I Corinthians 7:10). This principle is not based on the spiritual condition of one's mate. For Paul proceeded to apply the principle to the marriage where there is an unbelieving mate: "...If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased (willing) to dwell with him, let him not put her away. And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased (willing) to dwell with her, let her not leave him" (I Corinthians 7:12,13).

Paul further explained that the death of one partner is the only thing that dissolves the permanent, "one flesh" relationship of marriage in God's sight: "For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; ... So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man" (Romans 7:2,3; cf. I Corinthians 7:39).

It is important to understand that the permanence of marriage is not an arbitrary law of an old-fashioned God. All of God's laws regulating human life are based

on His righteous, unchanging character. God is a covenant-keeping God. He has never broken a covenant. He never will break a covenant. Even when His chosen people, Israel, were spiritually adulterous and unfaithful, He remained faithful to His covenant. Today when the Bride of Christ forsakes her first love and follows after other loves, God continues to keep His eternal promises. Moral laws and standards of right and wrong are absolute and unchanging, because they are determined by God's unchanging nature. As long as God is a covenant-keeping God, it will never be right for a man and woman to break their marriage covenant of companionship.

Divorce Violates Other Biblical Commands

In addition to the clear commands of Scripture not to divorce, there are several other biblical principles violated by divorce.

1. *God commands husbands to love their wives unconditionally, in spite of their impurities or failures (Ephesians 5:25,26).* Wives are also commanded to love and reverence their husbands (Titus 2:4; Ephesians 5:33). This kind of love is not a feeling; it is a life-long commitment that is not dependent on the behavior or response of the other partner. To divorce, for whatever reason, is an admission of failure to love one's mate as commanded by God.

2. *A divorce between two believers violates the command of I Corinthians 6:1-8 which forbids believers to go to law against one another before unbelievers.* It is better, Paul says, to "take wrong" and to "be defrauded" than to dishonor the name of God before unbelievers.

3. *Ecclesiastes 5:4-6 underlines the seriousness of breaking a vow made before God.* God promises to be angry with and to destroy the work of the hands of those who break a vow. There is no vow more sacred or binding than the marriage vow.

4. *When Jesus' disciples came to Him and asked how many times they should forgive someone who wronged them, they felt they were being extremely gracious to suggest seven times.* (The Pharisees only required three times.) But Jesus stunned his listeners by requiring essentially forgiveness without limit. This is the consistent teaching of the New Testament ... not revenge or defense, but forgiveness. "...Longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye" (Colossians 3:12,13). Divorce reveals an unwillingness to forgive without limit the wrongs of the other partner.

How can it be right to do anything that violates these and other clear commands of Scripture? We never have "scriptural grounds" to do something, when we must violate other Scripture to do it.

Marital Unfaithfulness Is Not a Biblical Basis for Divorce

"What about the 'exception clause'?" This question is inevitably asked in any discussion on divorce and remarriage. The question refers to two statements of Jesus, both found in the Gospel of Matthew: "But I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery; and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery" (5:32). (A similar statement is found in Matthew 19:9.)

Matthew is the only gospel writer to record this clause. Mark and Luke, in parallel accounts, make no reference to any exception permitting divorce. The Apostle Paul never speaks of such an exception in his teaching on divorce and remarriage.

There is a danger of focusing on one phrase (i.e., the "exception clause"), rather than on the clear message Jesus was trying to communicate.

The setting of Matthew 19 is an encounter between Jesus and the Pharisees. They initiated the discussion by trying to trap Jesus into taking sides with one of the two Jewish rabbinical schools of thought on divorce. The liberal school of Hillel permitted divorce for any reason. The more conservative school of Shammai permitted divorce only on the ground of unchastity. So the Pharisees asked, "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?" Jesus refused to take sides. Instead, he pointed the Pharisees back to the original design of God for marriage, reminding them of how God made male and female, and commanded them to leave their father and mother and to cleave to one another. "Wherefore," Jesus insisted, "they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matthew 19:6).

Notice that the "exception clause" was not in Jesus' original answer to the Pharisees. It came in response to their search for a "loophole." The Pharisees, like many believers today, were preoccupied with establishing grounds for divorce. Jesus was concerned about the permanence of marriage.

Unable to accept such a high standard, the Pharisees appealed to the Law of Moses, in which he recognized the existence of and regulated divorce (Deuteronomy 24:1-4).

While Jesus acknowledged Moses' regulation of divorce, He reminded the Pharisees that such laws were merely concessions to the hardness of their hearts. Then He returned to the heart of His message, a re-statement

The "Exception Clause"

Jesus went on to say, "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" (Matthew 19:9). If the "exception clause" does not establish marital unfaithfulness as a ground for divorce, what did Jesus mean when He said, "...except it be for fornication...?"

We must remember that Jesus was speaking with a group of men who were well versed in the Old Testament law. A careful study of the Old Testament passages regulating marriage, divorce, and remarriage, reveals two possible explanations for Jesus' use of the word "fornication" as a ground for divorce.

The first understanding of the word "fornication" comes out of the Jewish betrothal laws. In the Middle Eastern culture, an engaged couple was considered to be legally married. The law of Moses made a provision for "divorce" if the bride was found to be unfaithful during the time between their engagement and marriage. (This was the sense in which Joseph wanted to "divorce" Mary when she was found to be with child during their engagement period.)

Another often forgotten use of the word "fornication" is based on the marriage restrictions of the Old Testament law. Used in this sense, "fornication" refers to certain unlawful marriages that were to be terminated according to scriptural command. Incestuous and sodomite marriages were forbidden in the Jewish "Holiness Code" (Leviticus 18:6,22). Such marriages were unlawful and were not considered valid. (Acts 15:29 and I Corinthians 5:1 are two other New Testament passages that clearly use the word "fornication" to mean incestuous or homosexual marriages.)

In order to be consistent with the rest of Scripture, we must recognize that Christ's use of the "exception clause" in Matthew 5 and 19 does not refer to marital unfaithfulness, but rather to unchastity during the engagement period (in which case the engagement may be broken) or to incestuous or homosexual marriages (in which case the marriage is to be terminated, because it is null and invalid in God's sight).

That Jesus was disallowing divorce, even on the grounds of marital unfaithfulness, is evident from the response of His disciples. Their reaction of astonishment was not what one would expect if they understood the "exception clause" to mean immorality in general. They were startled and thought Jesus was teaching the absolute permanence of marriage so clearly that they sug-

gested it would be better not to marry at all.

Indeed, if the "exception clause" meant that divorce was permissible on the grounds of marital unfaithfulness, Jesus would have in effect justified divorce for everyone, based on his re-definition of adultery to include lust (Matthew 5:28). Far from establishing grounds for divorce, the spirit of Jesus' words was to establish an ideal even higher than that of the Old Testament law.

What About Remarriage After Divorce?

Recent studies by Greek and Hebrew scholars indicate that the early church fathers were nearly unanimous in their opinion that Christ taught that remarriage after a divorce (for whatever reason) is adulterous. With one exception, all the Greek and Latin writers of the first five centuries agreed that the marriage bond unites both parties until the death of one of them.

The Western Church held the view of the early church fathers, until the 16th century, when the classical humanist Erasmus suggested a different approach. Erasmus was a Roman Catholic priest and a contemporary of Martin Luther. For a short time he joined Luther's reformed movement. Eventually, however, he broke with Luther over justification by faith, was denounced by Luther as a heretic, and returned to the Roman church.

During his brief stay in the reformed camp, Erasmus suggested that remarriage after divorce ought to be permitted, thus giving the church greater opportunity to minister to divorced and remarried people. For some reason, Luther agreed with Erasmus and adopted what has become the popular, traditional Protestant view—the only view which allows remarriage after divorce.

This view has been accepted without question by many evangelicals, in spite of its scholarly problems and shaky historical foundations.

Once again, we need to return to the teaching of Jesus that (1) if a man divorces and remarries, he commits adultery, and (2) if a man divorces a woman (for whatever reason) and another man takes her as his wife, he is guilty of adultery (Matthew 5:32, 19:3-11; Mark 10:2-12; Luke 16:18).

God does not permit remarriage after divorce, as long as the first partner is still alive. Although the marriage bond may be legally dissolved, the "one flesh" relationship (and the vows made to God) does not become non-existent until the death of one of the partners.

Paul affirms this position on remarriage in I Corinthians 7:10-15. Simply stated, he makes it clear that two married believers are not to be divorced. However, if they do divorce, only two options remain: they must remain unmarried, or be reconciled to their original partner (7:10,11).

Verses 12-15 of I Corinthians 7 deal with a marriage between a believer and an unbeliever, a common situation in the early days of the church. Again, Paul's instructions are clear. The believer is not to leave; on the contrary, he is to do everything possible to preserve the marriage, and nothing to break it. The unbeliever must be allowed to stay as long as he is willing. Paul did recognize that the unbelieving partner in such a marriage might leave and divorce his mate, in which case the believer could not prevent it. But in no case was the believer free to remarry. Verse 39 establishes the conditions of remarriage: the death of the first mate, and that the new partner must be a believer.

The issue of remarriage after divorce is simplified by the question, "Did you vow, 'Till death do us part,' or 'Till divorce do us part'?" Although one partner may break his part of the vow and destroy the marriage, the other part of the vow must still be kept to God—"till death do us part."

God's Purpose for Conflict in Marriage

Some who are in the midst of marital difficulties will read the biblical teaching forbidding divorce and feel a desperate sense of being "locked into" an "impossible" situation. Let me address a few thoughts to you.

1. *Let me emphasize that there is no conflict too great for God to reconcile.* There is no partner too immoral or wicked for God to change. You must begin to exercise faith that God is bigger than your situation, and be willing to wait for Him to work.

2. *Learn to transfer your focus from your mate's failures (although he or she may be 95% wrong!) and begin to accept personal responsibility.* In many discussions on divorce, the focus is on the "innocent party." Often it is the presumed "innocent party" who comes for counseling. I have begun to ask these men and women, "If your mate had been married to Jesus, would she (or he) have behaved this way?" Invariably, the answer is, "No." The realization then begins to dawn that, "Everything in my life that is not like Christ has been a contributing factor to the failure of my marriage." I encourage these individuals to make a list of every area in their life (attitudes, values, priorities, actions, words) that is not like Jesus, and to ask God to change them, so He will then be free to change their mate.

After talking with thousands of married couples, I have seldom found a loving, submissive woman with a husband who is abusive or immoral. Just as rare is a loving, committed, unselfish man with a domineering or immoral wife. Ask God to reveal to you from His Word any failures in your own attitudes, actions, or spirit. Then cooperate with Him to become all that He wants you to be.

3. *You must be willing to allow God to use the pressures of your marriage to achieve eternal spiritual results in your life.* God is committed to conforming us to the image of Jesus. This is a lifelong process, and one which requires many tools and much pressure (much as the purest gold is formed under intense pressure over long periods of time). God uses the adverse circumstances in which we find ourselves as opportunities to learn to respond in Christ-likeness. He actually may create circumstances from which we cannot escape, so that we will be forced to learn what He wants to teach us. God intended for marriage to be one such binding relationship, knowing full well the inevitable conflicts that would arise because of our human selfishness. In these times of hurt and apparent failure, the most natural thing to do is to squeeze our way out of the vice in which He has placed us. As a result, we automatically forfeit the full expression of His character that He was trying to develop in us. However, if we will patiently remain in that binding relationship, He will ultimately be able to achieve His purposes in our lives.

4. *If you are committed to becoming like Jesus, you must be willing to suffer in a quiet, patient spirit.* Our human nature wants to find the easiest way out of painful situations. But Jesus was willing to suffer abusive, harsh, and unjust treatment so that we might be reconciled to God. In the same way, God's Word teaches that we have been called to suffer (I Peter 2:21), on behalf of others. I Peter 2:21-3:6 emphasizes that a believer's willingness to stay in his marriage and suffer quietly may be the only means by which the other partner will eventually be healed.

5. *Remember that, even in the case of persistent immorality and unfaithfulness, forgiveness and reconciliation are the goal—not divorce.* The Old Testament provides a beautiful illustration of this kind of love and forgiveness. The prophet Hosea married a woman and lavished gifts on her. She took the gifts and used them to buy other lovers. She became a prostitute and ended up in slavery. Though she expressed no desire to return to her husband, Hosea went into the slave market and bought her back to be his wife once again. This tender picture reveals the loving heart of God toward us. And it is a powerful reminder that we are to be partners with God in the business of redemption—not breaking up marriages because of offenses.

What If I Am Already Divorced?

When these biblical truths are taught, there is a common reaction among those who have been divorced (or who have married a previously divorced mate). They say, "If this is true (that there are no biblical grounds for

divorce or remarriage), then I'm condemned to spend the rest of my life guilty and unclean before God." I have also been asked, "Do you mean that God can never use me again?" Those who have been remarried or have married a divorced mate often ask, "If this marriage was wrong, does that mean that I'll be living 'in sin' for the rest of my life?"

The answer to these questions is, "Of course not!" God is as able and willing to forgive the sin of divorce as He is any other sin. And when God forgives our sin, He does not hold it against us any longer. Rather, His goal is to restore us to greater usefulness for His glory. But His forgiving, restoring ministry is only available to those who are willing to deal with their sin His way.

There is no magical formula for resolving past marital failures. But a few simple statements will help you to get started.

1. *You must come to the place where you agree with God that your divorce was sin and are willing to repent of that sin.* (If you married a divorced partner, you must agree with God that that marriage was contrary to His Word—Matthew 5:32; 19:2; Mark 10:11, 12; Luke 16:18.) Often a divorcee feels like a social leper. The church seems more willing to forgive and accept drug addicts, thieves, liars and embezzlers, than a divorcee. I believe the main reason for this is that the drug addict, thief, liar, or embezzler is usually willing to acknowledge that what he has done is sin. On the other hand, I find that most divorcees continue to justify their divorce based on "innocence," "circumstances," "counsel received," etc., instead of agreeing with God that they have sinned and repenting. God cannot bless your disobedience, but He will bless a repentant and broken spirit (Psalm 51:17). Remember "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy" (Proverbs 28:13).

2. *Agree with God about the failures in your life that contributed to the failure of your marriage.* One of the basic needs in the life of a divorced person is to remove all guilt. The easiest way to deal with guilt is to balance it with blame ("He was mostly wrong!"). But you will never experience the full cleansing and forgiveness of God until you are willing to stop blaming your mate and agree with God about your own needs.

True repentance involves humbly and honestly identifying your basic offenses against God and others. Ask God to reveal to you if you are guilty of these, or other, offenses:

- A willful, independent spirit against your parents as you were growing up.
- Marrying against the counsel or authority of your parents.
- Pre-marital sexual relationships.
- Wrong attitudes toward your partner—selfishness, pride, ungratefulness, anger, resentment, impatience, laziness.
- Hurtful, harsh, critical words that damaged your partner's spirit.
- Failing to love, cherish, and nourish your wife as Christ loved the church.

- Failing to meet the emotional and spiritual needs of your wife.
- Failing to reverence, honor, and obey your husband.
- Failing to serve your partner and put his/her needs and desires before your own.

Recognize that every sin reveals that you have pushed Christ off the throne of your life, and crowned yourself as “lord.” Repentance is not just being sorry for the consequences of your sin; it is confessing and grieving over the cause of your sin, which has greatly offended God.

3. *Purpose to clear your conscience with those you have wronged and begin to cooperate with God in reconciliation of all damaged relationships.* You may need to seek forgiveness from your parents, your former mate, your former partner’s parents, your children, your present partner, and any others whose lives have been affected by your sin. Remember that the primary purpose in seeking forgiveness is not to restore your marriage, but to obey God and restore a right relationship with Him.

4. *To whatever degree it is possible, rebuild broken relationships (Romans 12:18).* Begin to rebuild love and communication, by seeking to discern and meet the needs of those you have offended. Commit yourself to pray fervently and faithfully for God’s best in the life of your former partner.

5. *Purpose to remain unmarried (or to be reconciled) as long as your former mate is living (I Corinthians 7:10,11).* Although your emotions may cry out and long to enter into another marriage, to do so is in direct violation of God’s Word and will only result in further conflict.

I frequently hear well-meaning friends, counselors, and even pastors say, “It isn’t fair for her (him) to have to be single (implied, ‘miserable’) the rest of her life.” What they are really saying is that we have a right to be happy, and that it is not possible to be single and fulfilled. Both thoughts are rooted in selfishness. God created us to make Him happy (Revelation 4:11); and our greatest fulfillment comes from obeying Him. The primary concern of a divorced person should be to obey God and to seek the spiritual well-being of his former partner—not to pursue his or her own happiness.

The divorced man or woman will be infinitely better off remaining single, with a humble, obedient lifestyle, than he or she would be married, out of God’s will.

Paul reminds us in I Corinthians 7 that singleness is sometimes to be preferred to the married state, for single individuals may devote themselves “without distraction” to loving and serving the Lord Jesus.

6. *Turn the failures of your past into a present message and ministry.* One of the most powerful tools to restore God’s standard for marriage in our generation, is for believers to confirm out of their own lives that God’s ways are right. As God rebuilds your life and transforms you into the image of Christ, allow Him to use the message of your life to illustrate and confirm the truth of His Word and to rebuild other marriages.

7. *Make it your highest motivation and lifetime goal to seek God, to please Him, and to bring Him glory.*

Rebuilding the Foundations

In a day when lawlessness and ungodly men seemed to be prevailing, David cried out to God, “If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?” (Psalm 11:3).

The answer came back with great assurance: “The Lord is in His holy temple ... His eyes behold, His eyelids try, the children of men” (Psalm 11:4).

In the overwhelming flood of broken marriages we are experiencing today, we need to remember that God still rules; He sees all; He knows all; and His holiness is still the absolute standard that determines right and wrong.

God has a permanent hatred for all sin. His Word specifically states that He hates divorce (Malachi 2:16). God does not hate divorced people—He loves them, as unconditionally as He loves all of us as sinners. But He hates divorce, because it is an assault on His covenant-keeping character and defiles the beautiful object lesson He has given to the world of the eternal love relationship between the believer and the Lord Jesus.

I recognize that the position on divorce and remarriage that we have set forth in this issue, is not a popular one. We will be perceived by some as being intolerant, judgmental, condemning, or uncaring.

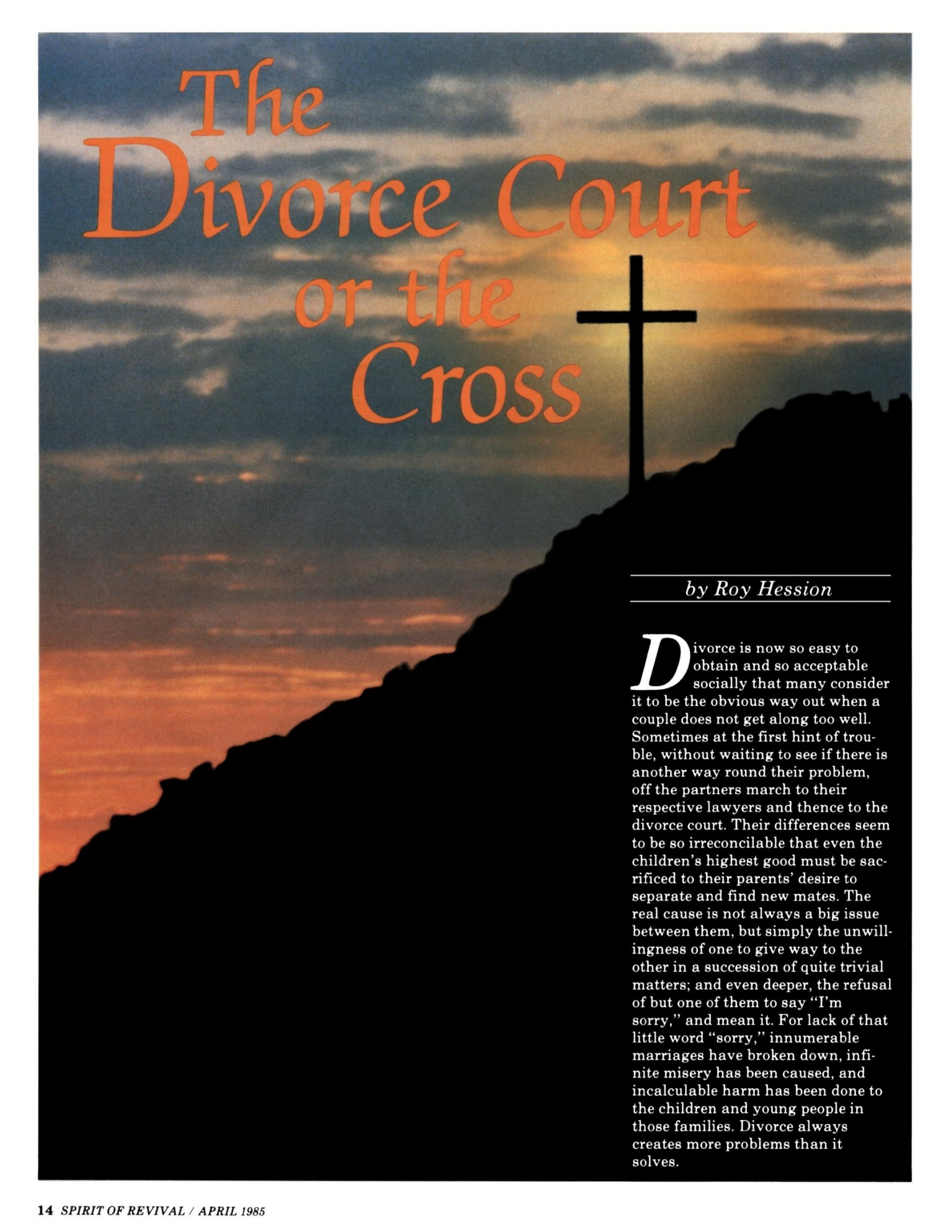
None of us really wants to “go against the flow” on an issue as volatile and emotional as divorce and remarriage. Frankly, I would like nothing better than to take a stand that none finds offensive.

But I know in my heart that God’s way is the truly caring way for those who have failed! And stronger than my concern about what others may think or say, is a longing to please God; to see His holiness exalted in the Body of Christ; to see unhealthy marriages healed before it is too late; and to see those who have been divorced and remarried truly set free, forgiven, and given hope for a future life of fruitfulness.

Many years ago, God placed in my heart a longing to see Him fulfill the promise of Isaiah 58:12:

“And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, the repairer of the breach, the restorer of paths to dwell in.”

May God so use each of us—for His glory. ■

The background of the page is a photograph of a landscape at sunset or sunrise. The sky is filled with clouds, with a warm orange and yellow glow from the low sun. In the foreground, a dark, silhouetted hill rises from the bottom left towards the center. On the crest of this hill, a large, simple wooden cross stands prominently against the sky. The title of the article is written in a large, orange, serif font, with the words 'The Divorce Court' on the first line, 'or the' on the second line, and 'Cross' on the third line, all positioned to the left of the cross.

The Divorce Court or the Cross

by Roy Hession

Divorce is now so easy to obtain and so acceptable socially that many consider it to be the obvious way out when a couple does not get along too well. Sometimes at the first hint of trouble, without waiting to see if there is another way round their problem, off the partners march to their respective lawyers and thence to the divorce court. Their differences seem to be so irreconcilable that even the children's highest good must be sacrificed to their parents' desire to separate and find new mates. The real cause is not always a big issue between them, but simply the unwillingness of one to give way to the other in a succession of quite trivial matters; and even deeper, the refusal of but one of them to say "I'm sorry," and mean it. For lack of that little word "sorry," innumerable marriages have broken down, infinite misery has been caused, and incalculable harm has been done to the children and young people in those families. Divorce always creates more problems than it solves.

What is perhaps the most disturbing feature in all this is the fact that this irresponsibility with regard to the permanence of the marriage vow has spread in measure to professing Christians. The shame done to the name of Christ makes one want to hide one's face and the easy speed with which some couples take steps to separate fills one with wonder at the immaturity and naivete which makes them think that divorce provides any real solution.

This state of things is all the more sorrowful when near at hand there stands God's ancient way of reconciling man to man and husband to wife, the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Never was there a more effective marriage counseling service than that which Jesus provides there. Alas, so few seem to go there, maybe because it is humbling to do so, and the divorce court seems the easier option.

Now let it be understood that there is no couple who does not sometimes have differences and a crossing of wills, no matter how loving or dedicated to God they may appear to be. Such things do not surprise or shock the Lord. He simply intends that when such situations arise they should go, not to the divorce court (such a possibility should never even occur to them), but to the Cross of His dear Son, where barriers can so easily be broken down and hearts made one again. He intends that they should come to the Cross, not once in a lifetime, but again and again as occasion may demand.

The Cross of Jesus, then, is not only the means by which man is reconciled to God, but the means also by which man is reconciled to his fellowman. For if sin causes barriers between man and God, it also causes barriers between man and man and between a man and his wife. And the way by which the Cross reconciles man to man is similar to the way it reconciles man to God.

How then does the cross reconcile man to God? For long centuries God sought to humble man and get him to accept the blame of his sin in order that God might then forgive him and restore him to Himself. But man would not be broken—he persistently refused to take the blame and return to the Lord. At last it was

as if God said, "If man will not be broken, I will be. If man will not take the blame, I will take the blame." That is what happened at the cross; it was God in Christ taking the blame, He the just, for us the unjust. This was the divine strategy to bring man back to Himself. And it worked in a way no other way had! For whenever a man is given a real sight of the Cross, of God taking the blame that was his, he is broken, melted, finished, and cries out, "O my God, that is my place; Thou art not the wrongdoer, I am! Mine the blame, Thine the love!" And immediately there is reconciliation between them; man surrenders and God forgives. The brokenness of Deity has provoked the brokenness of the creature!

In much the same way the Cross of the Lord Jesus effects the reconciliation of a man and his fellow—and we are thinking here especially of a man and his wife. However a trouble between them may begin, it is soon reduced to just one factor: who is wrong. The wife points to the husband and says, "You're the one who is wrong!" He points to her and says, "No, you're wrong!" Because neither will break, the situation becomes intolerable. The next step could be that one will contemplate seeing a lawyer. We will imagine that at last one of them is given a new sight of the Cross of Jesus. The one who was arguing that he was right sees the wholly and eternally right One taking the position of the wholly wrong one—dying as a criminal among criminals. Immediately his words falter and he begins to yield.

It is very difficult to maintain that one is right under the shadow of the Cross. Maybe the other person was wrong to begin with, but has not our reaction to his or her wrong been wrong too, dreadfully wrong? The anger, the bitterness, the words, the hatred, have they not been wrong? When we look at it that way we cannot say we are wholly right; far from it. And yet the wholly right One took the position of the wholly wrong one in order to save us from our sins. Why not then take the place of the wrong one too and confess it? And that is exactly what the one who sees the Cross afresh begins to do. This is what we call being broken.

But notice what happens next; that one goes to the other, not to accuse him or her, but rather to accuse himself and to ask the other's forgiveness for his own sins and reactions. The effect of this so often is to melt the other and he or she begins to repent too of what was wrong in his heart. It is not long then before there is a mutual forgiveness, where before there had been mutual accusation, and we have the beautiful sight of two sinners being reconciled together at the foot of the Cross of Jesus. And the love for one another that had long since flown out of the window begins to return, and that in abundant measure. Just as the brokenness of the Deity seen at the cross provokes the brokenness of the creature, so the brokenness of one of those creatures who has been to the Cross provokes the brokenness of the other, who then also comes to the Cross—and there they are made one again.

It may not always work out for you this way—at least, not immediately. This is no gimmick to get the other to repent. God never violates man's free will, and the other can refuse to humble himself. Only the Holy Spirit can melt and persuade him or her to bow the head, but He is more likely to use your brokenness than anything else. You see, you are no longer pointing at the other's sins, only confessing your own. The thing that the other was reacting against is no longer there and that gives God His chance to work in that heart too. So you be the first at the Cross, not waiting for the other! And even if the other does not immediately join you there, you will have the joy of knowing that your sins have been washed away and you are at peace with God. But again and again we find that the Cross of Jesus does indeed triumph in both hearts and great praise is brought to God over another home gloriously restored. ■

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Reaffirming Our Love & Commitment

Love, based on a permanent, lifetime commitment, is foundational to any successful marriage. In a day and age when thousands are breaking their vows, we want to encourage husbands and wives to take time to reaffirm their love and commitment to each other. In order to make this time of recommitment most meaningful, you may want to get a babysitter for the children and plan a special "date night." Prepare for your night out by individually reviewing these commitments. Then highlight your evening by verbalizing them audibly to each other. Take time to talk about each of the commitments you have made.... Discuss practical ways of applying them in your own marriage.... Ask each other how you can more effectively meet the other's needs. Be sure to close your time together in prayer, reaffirming your personal commitment to Him, unitedly surrendering your marriage totally to Him, and seeking His grace to keep these promises.

Husband

I PROMISE TO YIELD TO CHRIST AS THE LORD OF MY LIFE.

I will study God's Word each day and make its truths a part of my life.

I will keep my heart open and responsive to the conviction of God's Spirit.

I will earnestly seek God's will for our family, and will obediently follow His leadership.

I will let His Spirit fill me and produce in me Christ-like character and heart attitudes.

I will make it my highest goal to bring glory to Him through my own life and through our lives together.

I PROMISE TO LEAD YOU.

I will spend time each day praying with you and studying God's Word together.

I will share with you spiritual truths to help you become all that God wants you to be in every area of your life.

I will seek your input and counsel on decisions that need to be made.

I will lead our children to follow Christ, teaching and disciplining them in the light of God's Word.

I will challenge you to fully develop and utilize your spiritual gifts.

I will set a humble, godly example for you to follow.

I PROMISE TO LOVE YOU.

I will make you the first priority over all other human relationships and responsibilities.

I will pray for you faithfully.

I will communicate truthfully and lovingly with you, avoiding sarcasm, public criticism, and hurtful, belittling remarks.

I will be available to comfort you in times of sorrow or hurt.

I will not selfishly demand my own way, but will put your needs and interests ahead of my own.

I will be patient and forgiving, not holding your failures against you.

I will seek to keep our love fresh and growing through regular expressions, acts, and words of love.

I will be faithful to you and will reserve the most intimate place in my life for you, until we are separated by death.

ent

God

*has given us to each other
as husband and wife.*

*We want our love to be a
deep and lasting reflection
of His love for us.*

*We believe that genuine love is not a feeling;
it is a commitment.*

*We have committed our lives to Him
and to each other.*

Now we want to reaffirm that commitment.

*We realize that apart from the
indwelling, controlling Spirit of God,
it is impossible for us
to fulfill this commitment.*

*Our confidence is in His ability
to produce in our lives
that which is pleasing to Him.*

*We are utterly dependent on His grace
to enable us to live out this commitment
for the rest of our lives.*

Wife

***I PROMISE TO SUBMIT UNTO YOU
AS UNTO CHRIST.***

I will willingly yield to your authority in all things.

*I will not act independently, but will seek your counsel,
advice, and prayer.*

I will adopt your priorities, goals, and desires as my own.

*I will not resist your leadership or decisions, but will eagerly
cooperate with you in a spirit of love and humility.*

I will humbly accept reproof from you, as from the Lord.

*I will teach our children to honor and obey you, and will
wholeheartedly support your leadership of their lives.*

I PROMISE TO SERVE YOU.

*I will sacrificially give of myself to meet your physical,
emotional, and spiritual needs.*

I will be diligent in keeping our home clean and orderly.

*I will discipline myself to be physically and spiritually
pleasing for you.*

*I will be content with God's material provision through you,
and will work to live within those means.*

*I will be a partner with you in reaching out and
ministering to the needs of others.*

*I will work to create in our home a climate that
encourages you to grow spiritually and to
become all that God wants you to be.*

I PROMISE TO LOVE YOU.

I will accept and admire you as God made you.

*I yield my expectations to God and will trust Him
to be all that I need.*

*I will give you the freedom to fail without fear of
criticism or rejection.*

I will speak words that encourage and build you up.

I will listen with interest to anything that is on your heart.

I will share with you honestly my thoughts and concerns.

*I will offer physical love to you, and will not defraud you
by selfishly withholding that love.*

*I will allow God to develop in me a spirit that
is meek and quiet.*

*I will be faithful to you and will give myself to you above
all others, until we are separated by death.*



*This is directed to those individuals
who want to save their marriage, even
though they have to do it alone.*

How to Save Your Marriage Alone

by Ed Wheat, M.D.

Christian psychiatrist Paul D. Meier says that there are “only three choices for any person involved in an unhappy marriage: (1) get a divorce—the greatest cop-out and by far the most immature choice; (2) tough out the marriage without working to improve it—another immature decision but not quite as irresponsible as divorce; and (3) choose to build an intimate marriage out of the existing one—the only really mature choice to make.”¹

In your case, your partner may have already ruled out the second option and chosen the first without even considering the third. The

question is, what will you do? Surrender to the pressures of the world’s way of thinking and the emotions of the moment? Or make a choice based on confidence in the eternal truths of Scripture?

One choice clearly leads to bitterness and defeat as well as lost opportunities for blessing. “Divorce is more painful than death,” a woman told me the other day, her voice husky with pent-up emotion, “because it’s never really over.”

However, when you choose the pathway of irrevocable commitment to your mate and your marriage—regardless of how troubled your relationship may seem—you will find

that choice leading you into a place of agape love and peace and personal growth. These are just some of the rewards, for the chances are very good that you will also be able to enjoy the blessings that God has wanted to bestow on your marriage from the beginning.

I am not suggesting that the healing of a marriage is an easy process when one partner resists it. But are any easy choices open to you, after all? Torn relationships involve pain, whatever you do about them. As Peter points out in his first letter, it is far better to suffer (if suffer you must) for doing right, than for doing wrong. He makes it clear that God's favor and blessing shine on the one who patiently suffers, if necessary, in order to do His will. Meeting your marriage problems in a biblical manner is productive rather than pointless, and whatever hurts you encounter will be less damaging than the long-term effect of divorce would be.

If you are trying to build a love relationship in your marriage, or if you are trying to work out problems in your marriage, even admitting the faintest possibility of divorce—even as a last-ditch option—will affect your efforts adversely. It will sabotage your attempts to improve your relationship, and an unhappy situation can continue in your home indefinitely. Keeping divorce as an escape clause indicates a flaw in your commitment to God's plan for your marriage.

"The very word divorce should be cut out of the vocabulary of a couple when they marry," a woman with a restored marriage said, "because God's way is so much better for anyone who is willing to give it a try."

Another woman, considering the turbulent events of the past year that had driven her to grow emotionally and spiritually while she "loved her husband back" to their marriage, said, "You know, it's been all gain for me. I'm a different person now. The process was humbling, but it was worth it!"

A man said, "During the time when I was trying to win my wife's love and hold our family together, sometimes I got so tired of rejection that I didn't feel anything except a determination to do what the Bible said and leave the results with God. The only thing I was sure of was

that somehow God would work it out for my good because He promised that in His Word. I never imagined the love affair He has actually given us. He really does do more than we can ask or think!"

If you are willing to make a commitment to your marriage based on the eternal principles and promises of the Word of God, you can take heart and let hope grow in proportion to your commitment.

Contrary to what the world believes, one person can save a marriage. I have seen numerous marriages saved when only one partner applied biblical principles in a wholehearted commitment to the mate and the marriage.

Controlling Your Thoughts

It is important to fill your mind with positive biblical input. You need to take in truth from those who are as committed to the permanence of marriage as the Bible is. And don't listen to anyone else!

"I had to take a stand on this matter of outside influence," a wife told me. "Everyone has been anxious to give me advice about my marriage. I refuse to discuss it with people who hold an unbiblical viewpoint, or people who try to turn me against my husband, or people who make me feel sorry for myself and encourage weakness in me. I can't afford to be around worldly friends anymore. They tear me down; they tear my husband down. They may mean well, but they are so misguided. I want to be with people who will stand with me and support me when I might falter."

Once your commitment is made, you will find that you no longer lie at the mercy of outside events, reacting to every new circumstance with fresh pain and bewilderment. Instead, your viewpoint becomes, "This is what I am going to do, no matter what, because it is God's way to do it. I can count on His wisdom, and I can trust Him with the results of a course of action based on His Word."

"I'm not standing by my marriage anymore on the basis of what

the outcome will be," one woman told me. "People urge me to dump my husband, give up on him because he's made my life miserable; they tell me I deserve someone better, that I wouldn't have any trouble finding someone else to love me. My answer is that marriage is sacred; marriage is permanent; I am committed by my marriage vows; I am one flesh with my husband; and then I really shock them! I tell them that even if there is no happy ending for our marriage, I will not regret the stand I have taken. I will know that I made the right decision and followed the only course possible for me.

"But my trust is not in what I am doing," she added. "It is in God and His Word. He has a perfect, loving plan for my life, and He's wise enough and powerful enough to carry it out, if I cooperate by following His counsel. So I'm going to keep on obeying Him in my marriage and I'll leave the results with Him."

Learning to Love

We come now to the practical behavior that can save your marriage. Your challenge is to learn how to love your partner day in and day out in such a way that there will be a responding love. Remember, you become loveable by loving, not by straining to attract love. Loving your mate in God's way does not mean clinging, complaining, or making demands. Moodiness, anger, and temperamental displays will only hinder your efforts. Loving your mate in God's way does not mean playing games—trying to inspire jealousy or insecurity, playing hard to get, taking petty revenge, or any of the other approaches you may have used in your early teens that are wholly inappropriate for marriage.

We all hunger to be loved. And we want tangible proof that we are loved. But someone in the marriage has to take the initiative and begin the loving process.

I recommend that you read I Corinthians 13 again and again to

learn the behavior patterns that characterize the genuine loving that God can use in healing a marriage. Fill your mind and spirit with these basic behavior responses so that they can reshape your attitudes and change your actions.

The spiritual principle you must comprehend and lay hold of is this: "... He (the Lord) said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee, for My strength is made perfect in weakness..." (II Corinthians 12:9).

In the light of that principle, here is preparation you need to make your purposeful effort to save your marriage.

1) Prepare for the worst, knowing you have a sufficiency of grace.

Adultery probably is the worst sin that most mates can think of their partner committing. It is wise to be prepared practically, emotionally, and spiritually for the worst. Prepare for the possibility of infidelity by realizing that adultery is sin—the same as any other sin, because God can forgive that individual and so can you! You must forgive if you are to be free to love and live and grow as a person.

Then you must be prepared to respond in a loving way, even to a continuing infidelity. It's not that you are condoning it; it's not that you are ignoring it. But early on in the process of resolving your marriage problems you have to come to the powerful realization that you cannot reform your mate, no matter how hard you try. Your only option is to become the husband or wife God has commanded you to be in Scripture, and to apply every principle of behavior from the Word of God to the day-by-day challenges of your situation. God may well save your marriage. Without question, you will enjoy God's blessing and favor.

What will change our mate? Sometimes the change comes through a personal knowledge of the Scriptures. But what about the mate who will not go to the Word of God for counsel? In that case, he or she must see in you a living, walking example of God's truth being applied faithfully in every situation. Never leave the impression that you are behaving this way just to change your mate. You do it because God said that you must, whether it seems to work or not.

In severely troubled marriages, it is usually the husband who comes and goes from the family home, perhaps spending part of the time with another woman.

If you are doing your part at home, a clear contrast will become evident to him. "For the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil: But her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; ... Lest thou shouldest ponder the path of life, her ways are moveable, that thou canst not know them" (Proverbs 5:3-6). Sooner or later, this

I have seen numerous marriages saved when only one partner applied biblical principles.

will become apparent to your husband. You have the opportunity, if he is still coming home at least part of the time, to show him genuine sweetness with no bitter aftertaste and the gracious, stable serenity that only Christ can give. Your behavior can remind him of the continuing joy and dignity of remaining as the head of his family in contrast to the social, spiritual degradation that biblically is promised to the man who casts his lot with an adulteress. You will not accomplish this by trying, but by being the loving, gracious wife God would have you to be as defined in the Scriptures.

This is why I urge all men and women under my counseling to avoid separation no matter how serious their problems are. (The only exception is in the case of actual physical injury that could require a legal separation.) As long as the two of you live in the same household, you have the daily opportunity to put powerful biblical principles into action. You are in a position to love

so unchangingly that the impact on your partner will intensify with the passing of time. If you are living apart, then you must take advantage of every common bond you have, such as children or business, to display love through your behavior and attitudes.

When the wife in the marriage becomes infatuated with someone else, the husband must be prepared to actively pursue his wife and win her back. But the wife should never be allowed to feel that he is doing this out of duty. Only love will have the force to prevail over the warring emotions that have brought an unfaithful wife to this point.

For instance, a church-going wife's one-time indiscretion became public knowledge. Deeply ashamed and emotionally confused, she left her husband and moved into an apartment where, in a combination of guilt, defiance, and loneliness, she continued to see the other man. Her husband had all the sympathy from their family and church friends. But was he blameless in the matter? Or had he failed to love her as he should before the act of infidelity occurred? In almost every case, the injured party has to bear some responsibility for the breakdown of the marriage. In this situation, the wife's out-of-character behavior had developed after the tragic loss of their child. The husband recognized that he had failed to exhibit the sensitive understanding he should have shown her at that time. Clearly he had failed to meet her needs and desires.

Now he had a choice. He could let her go or he could win her back (as did Hosea in the Old Testament), restoring her to her former place of honor. I counseled this husband to love his wife back to their marriage by nourishing her emotionally and cherishing her in every possible way during this upheaval in her life. "You have to convince her that you love her, that she is valuable and precious beyond any other woman in your sight, that you need her and do not want to live without her."

When you must face the possibility of unfaithfulness on the part of your partner, remember that the Lord has grace enough for you, not only to endure or accept the situation, but also to redeem it.

2) Prepare to be "perfect," knowing you have a sufficiency of grace.

This may come as shocking

information, but if you want to save your marriage, you cannot be just a "good" husband or wife. You have to be perfect in your behavior toward your partner. You must do and be everything the Bible prescribes for your role in marriage, and you must be very sensitive to avoid anything that will set your partner off. The least slip in word or action will give your mate the excuse he or she is looking for to give up on the marriage. Since resentment and rationalization are two of the key issues in the thinking of an unfaithful partner, even one remark spoken out of turn can fan the flames of old resentments and give weight to rationalizations that the partner is manufacturing to excuse his or her behavior.

In talking about "perfect" behavior, we must always recognize the fact that it is the Lord who makes this possible, providing the pattern, the purpose, and the power for fundamental changes in our behavior and attitudes.

Three rules should be followed as you learn to love your partner with a love that can save your marriage:

First, consistently do everything you can to please your mate and meet his or her needs and desires. Love your partner in such a way that it will be interpreted as love. Study what your partner needs. One wife said, "I used to work in my husband's business, and I thought I was really helping him really impressing him with my wisdom and efficiency. After our marriage ran into deep trouble, I discovered that wasn't what he needed at all. Now I am staying at home and becoming what he needs—not a whirlwind worker, but a woman who quietly loves him and believes in his ability to handle things well."

Pleasing your partner involves action—sometimes drastic action. A striking example of this is the wife who had had endless fights with her husband over flying in their plane. He was an enthusiastic private pilot; she was terrified of flying. But when it came down to saving her marriage, she went alone to the airport and took flying lessons, trusting the Lord to remove her fears. Today she is a pilot too, and they have a better marriage than ever before.

Second, consistently show your

mate the respect and honor commanded in Scripture, whether your mate personally merits it or not. I cannot overemphasize this. This husband, whatever his behavior, is by position the head of the wife and is to be treated with respect at all times. The wife, whatever her behavior, as an equal heir of the grace of life, is to be given the place of highest honor and special privilege by her husband. As someone has said, she is to be treated like a Ming vase instead of an old garbage can!

Third, totally avoid criticism of your mate. Accept whatever your partner is or is not doing without comment or histrionics. Do not even suggest a secret disapproval.

3) Prepare to be rejected, knowing you have a sufficiency of grace.

What about rejection while you are trying to carry out these principles of love? I can only say that Jesus Christ was perfect and He was rejected! We should not be surprised when it happens to us. But do not give up your efforts because of rejection. One husband told me how he had sent a Valentine's Day flower arrangement to his estranged wife with a card from himself and their little girl. When he came home from work that night, the flowers were on the front step waiting for him—returned in scorn. Later, when she called him at his business, he told her, "I just want you to know that I love you. The hatred you are throwing at me right now cannot change that. I've discovered since we separated that my love for you has much higher limits than I ever realized."

She was quite taken aback by the loving way he had responded to her rejection of his gift. She said, "But you wouldn't want to live with a woman who doesn't love you?"

He answered, "Honey, love is something that doesn't grow overnight, especially when it has been treated the way both of us have treated our relationship in the past. Love is something you work at and build together. We haven't even tried that yet."

You need to give love to your mate biblically, emotionally, and physically whether you receive a response or not. This is only possible through agape love.

Even in the best of marriages, unlovable traits show up in both partners. And in every marriage, sooner or later, a need arises that

can be met only by unconditional love. God's agape love is the answer for all the woundings of marriage. This love has the capacity to persist in the face of rejection and continue on where there is no response at all. It can leap over walls that would stop any human love cold. It is never deflected by unlovable behavior and gives gladly to the undeserving without totalling the cost.

A marriage possessing agape love can survive anything!

Agape love is plugged into an eternal power source, and it can go on operating when every other kind of love fails. Not only that! It loves, no matter what. No matter how unlovable the other person is, agape can keep on flowing. Agape is as unconditional as God's love for us. It is a mental attitude based on a deliberate choice of the will, and so you can choose right now to begin to love your mate with an agape love, no matter how much indifference or rejection you must face.

No matter how bad your marital situation seems to be, you and your partner can fall in love with each other all over again—or maybe for the first time. If you've been wavering on the edge of a traumatic divorce, you can rekindle your love. You can learn how to handle the most difficult problems in such a way that your marriage will become rooted in love—stabilized and strong enough to withstand the stresses of a lifetime. Even if you are trying to save your marriage all by yourself, without any cooperation from your partner, it can happen. When they are properly and consistently applied, there are no exceptions, no unique cases where God's eternal concepts will fail. ■

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¹ Paul D. Meier, *YOU CAN AVOID DIVORCE*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978), p.4.

A Husband and Wife Tell How God Miraculously Intervened to Reconcile Their "Hopeless" Marriage

God Led Us to Remarry

Janet:

We have been married for one week, honeymooning happily on a picturesque farm in Pennsylvania. Four years ago at this time, we would have never dreamed we would be getting married again—to each other.

Brian and I grew up together in the same church. I had accepted Christ as my personal Saviour at the age of seven, was active in our youth group, and felt God was calling me to the mission field as a nurse.

Brian had accepted Christ at the age of sixteen but had not made Him Lord of his life. Even though my parents objected to my dating Brian, I took the situation into my own hands and did as I pleased. As our relationship developed, the Lord worked in Brian's heart, and one night he made a decision to let Jesus control his life. From that point on, Brian's dependence upon God grew and I leaned on his spirituality. We were married after two and a half years of dating. After a short honeymoon we drove up to Great Lakes, Illinois, where Brian attended a Navy A school. From all outward appearances, we seemed to have it made. However, I didn't like the responsibilities of marriage, and gradually began turning my attention to the things the world had to

offer. Throughout the next five months, our relationship suffered spiritually, mentally, and physically.

Brian left for a six-month Mediterranean tour of duty which left me alone, relieved, and wide open for Satan's attacks in my life. Letters from Brian during this time revealed a genuine love for me and our Saviour, but my desires, thoughts, and lifestyle were changing drastically, and I began to doubt not only my love for Brian, but my love for God. His will for my life didn't matter any longer. This was my chance to live for myself, and I was going to enjoy every minute of it. My letters to Brian became few and far between, because I simply had nothing to say to him. After a few attempts to salvage our marriage (with no help on my part), we finally separated.

For over three years, I filled my life with those things the world calls exciting—everything from nightclubs to Caribbean cruises. I threw myself into my job and school to make up for other lack of fulfillment in my life and pushed any thought of Brian or God far into the deepest crevice of my mind. When our divorce became final, I felt relieved and free. My freedom sent me searching until I ended up in

Hawaii. What more could anyone ask for?

I was bound and determined to be happy apart from God. Sailing in crystal blue waters on sunny days in the midst of lush tropical islands indicates happiness to most people. But gradually God brought circumstances into my life. I couldn't find a place in the world where I really fit in; so after nine months in Hawaii I decided to go back to the only place in the world I knew I would be accepted—home.

Although it was comforting to be with my parents and brother again, I had to keep busy trying to fill seemingly endless hours. I came to the place where I couldn't even sleep anymore. I knew I couldn't continue living this way much longer. One day a cousin showed up at our house for lunch. While I was doing the dishes and talking about a prospective job on a cruise ship in the Caribbean, he mentioned something about me being discontented. His words pierced my heart. I got uncomfortable and wished he would leave. However, before the hour ended, I was trapped into a dinner invitation with his family. During the evening I spent in his home, I noticed something different. A gentle peace and contentment which I longed for seemed to permeate their

home. The conversation turned to my life, and I began to weep, revealing the real emptiness, the vacuum that I couldn't fill in my life. I knew Christ was my answer but it had been so long since I had prayed. As Ricky and his wife knelt with me, all I could do was ask God to forgive and help me. They invited me to go with them to some revival meetings they were attending. I promised to go Monday night.

During those next days, I began to read God's Word and to talk to Him. For the first time in a long time, I could sleep at night. But I still had a heaviness of heart. By Sunday night it was as though the Holy Spirit led me by the hand and I went alone to the revival meeting. I asked God for physical strength to get me up the steps of the church where I had been married four years earlier. That night the Holy Spirit touched my heart. When the evangelist said, "Obedience is doing exactly what God wants you to do, immediately, with the right heart attitude," I got up and walked to the prayer room, with a broken heart asking God to take my whole life, and yielding everything to Him.

Little did I know that Brian was in the prayer room across the hall. It didn't take long to realize what the next step would be. I knew it was my responsibility to ask Brian to forgive me for hurting him and making life unbearable in our marriage. Already God was beginning to untangle the mess I had made of my life.

Brian:

When Janet came up and asked to talk to me, I was astonished. Before the initial shock could even wear off, I found myself walking to a room to talk to a person I never thought I would see again. As I wondered what had happened to her during these last two years, my thoughts flashed back to my first Mediterranean cruise. I had written weekly to Janet, expressing my love for her, but received no reply. My relationship with the Lord became more real with each passing day, as I sought Him for guidance through His Word and prayer. A real turning point of my life occurred during the last part of the cruise at Barcelona, Spain, when I shared with a missionary my burden for Janet. He asked me if I had thanked the Lord

for her and for the whole situation. That was something I had never even considered! We both got down on our knees and thanked the Lord for everything that had happened between Janet and me. The instant result was an unspeakable peace and joy.

The voyage back to America was a time of prayer and wondering what I would face when I arrived home. I met a woman who didn't know if she loved me or the Lord

I sought the Lord's forgiveness, and began to pray faithfully for her.

anymore. Despite much prayer and effort during the next months, the result was separation.

I continued to seek the Lord's direction during those next three years in the Navy. At one point, I began to have feelings of bitterness toward Janet. But God spoke to me through I Samuel 12:23: "Moreover, as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you." Recognizing my sin, I sought the Lord's forgiveness, committed Janet to the Lord, and began to pray faithfully for her.

During my last year in the Navy I started to pray about preparing for fulltime Christian service after my discharge. By the end of that year, I was out of the Navy and on my way to Bible college. I needed additional money for my second semester. As I prayed about what to do, the Lord seemed to be telling me to go home for awhile. So I packed everything I owned and went home to see my parents. I intended to stay for just a few weeks, before returning to Nashville to get a job. But someone mentioned that I should stay for another week to hear a revival team called Life Action Ministries.

The Sunday before the meetings were to start, I was surprised to hear

that Janet had come back home from Hawaii. But the big surprise came when Janet's cousin shared with me how Janet had been at his house for dinner and had asked Jesus to forgive her and help her. He said she might be coming to the revival meetings and wanted me to be prepared if I saw her. We prayed for Janet, but the thought of my ever being her husband again was blocked out of my mind.

That next Sunday night, I was uptight when I found out that Janet was in the service. I wanted her to come back to the Lord, but I was afraid of the thought of ever being married to her again. However, I wanted to be in the Lord's will, so I gave it to the Lord and said I would be willing to do anything for Him.

Suddenly I found myself walking with Janet to a room where she asked me to forgive her. We knelt and prayed together. That night after the service, a Life Action staff member talked with us about the various attitudes and failures that had caused our marital problems and resulted in our divorce. As he talked, the Spirit was softening both of our hearts, and by the time he finished we both knew we would be getting married.

Those next weeks leading up to the wedding were filled with many thrilling changes in both of our hearts and attitudes toward each other.

Now as we sit here on our honeymoon, reflecting on what the Lord has done in our lives, we have a wonderful sense of anticipation about what He is going to do in the future. Praise the Lord! Janet and I are two walking miracles because of the Lord's grace, mercy, lovingkindness, and faithfulness in our lives. We can honestly say from the depths of our heart that God answers prayer and rewards those who diligently seek Him. ■

Ten years after their remarriage, Janet and Brian (not their real names) are still growing in their oneness and love for each other. Brian is pastoring a church which they began together last year!



We can't play fast and loose with obedience to God the Father while claiming the name of the Son who would not and could not disobey.

The Vow-Keepers

by Roger C. Palms

There is a woman whose husband has been seducing other women for years. Her friends have encouraged her to get a divorce, but she won't. She's not trying to be a martyr or punish herself psychologically.

She had vowed to God, "For better or worse," and she meant that vow. Her commitment was not only

in the words she spoke, but also in the promise behind them. She believes that God heard her when she made that promise, so she is going to stand on it and seek God's help to carry it out.

She is trusting God, whether or not His help comes according to her timetable or to the degree she would like.

Her stance is different from that taken by most in our culture. To many, it seems incomprehensible. "How can she do it?" they ask.

She hears their arguments: "You are the innocent party." "Think of your children." "If divorce is wrong, it isn't the worst wrong; God forgives." "You have a responsibility to yourself." "God is love, and He wants you to be loved." Then comes that often used line: "God wants you to be happy."

But she already knows their arguments. She has heard them over and over again, thought them through, and made up her mind.

Yet even Christians who accept her view or who praise her actions look for God to grant her some compensation for her faithfulness. But no reward has come; she still lives in misery.

So fellow Christians begin to argue with her: "If God expected you to endure such suffering, at least He would have given you some other blessing to reward you." But she responds, "Why should He?"

"I obey my pledge because I promised I would obey it," she says. "Why should I expect God to give me some reward for doing what I promised to do in the first place?"

"God was there when I said, 'For better or worse,' and God hasn't moved away. And no matter how far my husband has drifted, God is with me now. Would I divorce my husband if he had lost his mind to a disease instead of losing his head to other women?"

She has kept her vow, despite the people reminding her that times have changed, her husband has changed, and she has changed. She remembers what they have chosen to forget: God hasn't changed, and her promise was made to God.

Such faithful ones, the vow-keepers, are not some new kind of standard-bearers for God. They are simply people who have chosen to be consistent in following Jesus.

They are not looking for personal suffering or trying to draw attention to what they are doing and what they are giving up. They want to enjoy life, the pleasures of home, and good health. But whether they have the good or the bad, they seek to follow Jesus faithfully, wherever that obedience leads.

Jesus did not come to call a few selected disciples to a happy three-

year vacation. Nor did he come to make people comfortable. He came to obey His Father. And that obedience led to a cross. There was no alternative for our redemption.

But what if Jesus had chosen the more pleasant way of remaining with His Father? Or, once incarnate, what if He had decided the situation had changed or that the responsibility of the cross was too great? Can Jesus' disciples then take such liberties?

Our obedience cannot depend on how we happen to feel in a given situation.

Those who choose to follow the Master do so on His terms. Our obedience cannot depend on how we happen to feel in a given situation. "Ye are My friends," Jesus said, "if ye do whatsoever I command you" (John 15:14). We are to obey even if we never see "good results." The measure of what is good is not ours to make.

In initially saying yes to Jesus Christ, a person has to know that he is choosing to obey—to follow whether there are great rewards or none, whether it is for good or for suffering.

Some summertime believers may be content to do without for a while if they think God will provide blessings for them in the end. But God may not. The committed disciple doesn't question that. He knows he must go on, even through long spiritual winters.

Jesus said, "...If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matthew 16:24). That means exactly what Jesus says—follow Him.

It doesn't mean I automatically decide to live on a smaller income, but it does mean I will if He decides it for me. It doesn't mean I surrender my house, but I will if He wishes it.

It doesn't mean I choose to face a firing squad or the persecution of my neighbors, but I will if that's where obedience takes me.

That's the way it has to be. In coming to Him, I purposely choose to yield my body as a living sacrifice, "holy, acceptable unto God, which is (my) reasonable service" (Romans 12:1).

"...Ye are not your own. For ye are bought with a price..."—price of the Lord Jesus Christ (I Corinthians 6:19,20). The Christian is a disciple, a chosen vessel "...unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work..." (II Timothy 2:21).

Friendship with God has neither heroics nor fame to it. There are no cheers from the crowd. It is instead a choice to walk quietly but faithfully beside Jesus—even while all around the noise of the world's market attracts, even while those who avoid Jesus and seem to live comfortably in their unbelief are saying under their breath, "What a fool."

The disciple determines he must have what God wants for him. Nothing less will do. This means he cannot and will not give in to the temptations that dissipate and destroy. There is too much at stake.

He has only one life; why should he use it to run after things that can never satisfy? Why should he give his life to anything less than the wholeness, purity, love, and joy of God?

Why work so hard to gain what "moth and rust doth corrupt," what "thieves break through and steal," when he can have so much more that will never decay (Matthew 6:19,20)? God has chosen us "...that we should be holy and without blame before him..." (Ephesians 1:4).

You can start a life of holy obedience now. Don't worry whether others will follow with you. And as you say yes to God, He will enable you to tell everything else no. ■

Roger C. Palms is editor of *Decision* magazine and author of *THE PLEASURE OF HIS COMPANY* (Tyndale House Publishers, © 1982). This excerpt is used by permission.

SELF-EVALUATION:

Are You Using These Biblical Keys to a Lasting Marriage?



Here is a list of fifteen key ingredients in a godly, lasting marriage. Answer each question as honestly as possible, to determine which characteristics God needs to develop in your life as a husband or wife. Don't get discouraged by how far you still have to go! Instead, let these questions motivate you to further spiritual growth. Remember that success in marriage is not so much "where" you are, but the "direction" in which you are heading!

As God convicts you of specific areas of need in your life, you may wish to memorize and meditate on related Scripture, asking God to make each of these qualities a reality in your life.

Husband

- | | Yes | No | | Yes | No |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Commitment (Matt. 19:5,6) | | | 9. Communication (Eph. 4:25,29) | | |
| a. Am I committed to stay married, regardless of my feelings or other circumstances, until we are separated by death? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | a. Is my wife my closest confidante? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. Does my wife know that I will never divorce her for any reason? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | b. Do I always tell my wife the truth? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Serving (Gal. 5:13) | | | c. Do I avoid sarcasm, hurtful remarks, and public criticism of my wife? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| a. Do I put my wife's needs and desires ahead of my own? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | d. Do I regularly compliment my wife and tell her that I love her? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. Do I offer to help my wife, especially when she is tired or under pressure? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | e. Do I listen attentively when my wife speaks to me? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Yielding Rights (Phil. 2:5-8) | | | f. Do I value my wife's opinions? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| a. Have I yielded to God my "right" to my own time and possessions? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 10. Kindness (Eph. 4:32) | | |
| b. Do I respond humbly when I feel that my "rights" have been violated, rather than responding in anger or impatience? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | a. Am I well-mannered at home and in public? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Forgiveness (Col. 3:13) | | | b. Do I sometimes give my wife unexpected gifts or "love notes"? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| a. Do I seek to resolve each conflict or misunderstanding as soon as possible? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 11. Gratitude (Prov. 31:10,28) | | |
| b. Am I willing to "forgive and forget" my wife's past failures, and not hold them against her? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | a. Do I notice and express appreciation for the time and effort my wife devotes to me, to her physical appearance, to our home, and to our children? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Humility (Phil. 2:3) | | | b. Do I praise my wife for spiritual, Christ-like qualities in her life? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| a. Am I quick to admit when I am wrong? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 12. Loyalty (I Cor. 13:7) | | |
| b. Am I content to not have the last word? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | a. Do I speak well of my wife to others? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. Am I first to take steps to resolve a conflict, regardless of who is to blame? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | b. Do my wife and I face difficult circumstances together, rather than as adversaries? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. Patience (I Cor. 13:4) | | | 13. Acceptance (Rom. 15:7) | | |
| a. Do I take time to discuss various issues and decisions with my wife? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | a. Do I love and accept my wife as she is? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. Am I patient with my wife when she is under emotional or physical pressure? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | b. Do I make my wife feel that she is a woman of great value and worth to God, to me, and to our family? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. Can my wife come to me with a problem, without being afraid of my reaction? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 14. Availability (I Cor. 7:3-5) | | |
| 7. Sensitivity (I Pet. 3:7) | | | a. Does my wife know that she has access to me, whenever she needs me? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| a. Do I sense when there is something on my wife's heart and encourage her to express it? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | b. Do I ensure that my wife and I have regular times alone together? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. Do I remember important days and special occasions? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 15. Leadership (Eph. 5:23) | | |
| c. Do I <i>court</i> my wife like I did when we were dating? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | a. Do I set goals and provide direction for the spiritual development of my wife and children? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d. Before I speak, do I stop to think of how my words will affect my wife? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | b. Do I take time to pray about needs and decisions that affect our family? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. Purity (Eph. 5:3,4) | | | c. Do I take initiative to discern and meet the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of my wife and children? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| a. Am I physically self-controlled, keeping myself only for my wife? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | d. Do I protect my wife from unnecessary pressures? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. Do I keep my mind free from books, magazines, or entertainment that could stimulate fantasizing or thoughts that are not morally pure? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | | | |
| c. Do I avoid suggestive humor, conversation, and behavior? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | | | |

- | | Yes | No | | Yes | No |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Commitment (Matt. 19:5,6) | | | 8. Sensitivity (Tit. 2:5) | | |
| a. Am I committed to stay married, regardless of my feelings or any other circumstances, until we are separated by death? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | a. Am I sensitive to my husband's occasional desire to be alone or undisturbed? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. Does my husband know that I will never divorce him for any reason? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | b. Am I sensitive to the best times to tell my husband negative news or to offer suggestions or constructive criticism? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. Next to my relationship with God, is my relationship with my husband the highest priority of my life? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | | | |
| d. Do I pray faithfully for my husband? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 9. Purity (Eph. 5:3,4) | | |
| 2. Serving (Gal. 5:13) | | | a. Do I keep my mind free from books, magazines, or entertainment that could stimulate fantasizing or thoughts that are not morally pure? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| a. Do I put my husband's needs and desires ahead of my own? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | b. Do I dress modestly, drawing attention to the inner life of Christ, rather than to my physical appearance? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. Do I look for creative ways to please my husband? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | | | |
| c. Am I content to serve, even when my husband doesn't seem to notice or appreciate my efforts? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 10. Communication (Eph. 4:25,29) | | |
| 3. Yielding Rights (Phil. 2:5-8) | | | a. Do I always tell my husband the truth? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| a. Have I yielded all my expectations concerning my husband to God? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | b. Do I avoid sarcasm, hurtful remarks, and public criticism of my husband? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. Do I trust God alone to meet all of my physical, emotional, and spiritual needs? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | c. Do I speak words of encouragement and admiration to my husband? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. Have I yielded to God my "right" to my own time and independence? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | d. Do I discipline myself not to interrupt or contradict when my husband is talking? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Submission (Eph. 5:22-24) | | | 11. Kindness (Eph. 4:32) | | |
| a. Do I willingly yield to my husband's authority in all things? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | a. Do I treat my husband as graciously as I would a guest? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. Do I communicate an <i>attitude</i> of submission, as well as submissive <i>actions</i> ? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | b. Do I go out of my way to perform special acts of kindness for my husband? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. Do I seek my husband's counsel, rather than acting independently? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | | | |
| d. Am I teaching our children, by my example and words, to honor and obey their father? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 12. Gratitude (Prov. 31:26) | | |
| 5. Forgiveness (Col. 3:13) | | | a. Do I regularly express appreciation for the sacrifices my husband makes to provide for our family? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| a. Do I seek to resolve each conflict or misunderstanding as soon as possible? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | b. Do I praise my husband for spiritual, Christ-like qualities in his life? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. Am I quick to forgive my husband for his failures, offenses, or insensitivities? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | | | |
| c. Do I refuse to bring up the past or to hold past failures against my husband? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 13. Loyalty (I Cor. 13:7) | | |
| 6. Humility (Phil. 2:3) | | | a. Do I speak positively about my husband to others? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| a. Am I quick to admit when I am wrong? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | b. Do I focus on my husband's successes and positive traits, rather than his weaknesses and failures? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. Am I content to not have the last word? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | c. Do I hold in confidence personal matters that my husband shares with me? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. Am I willing to relinquish my "right" to be understood or to prove my point? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | | | |
| 7. Patience (I Cor. 13:4) | | | 14. Acceptance (Rom. 15:7) | | |
| a. Do I respond graciously to interruptions and irritations? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | a. Do I love, accept, and admire my husband as he is? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. Am I willing to overlook obvious imperfections in my husband? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | b. Does my husband feel that he has the freedom to fail, without fear of criticism or rejection? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | | 15. Availability (I Cor. 7:3-5) | | |
| | | | a. Am I willing to adjust my schedule to meet my husband's desires? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | | b. Am I willing to offer physical love to my husband, regardless of my personal feelings or desires? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

WHO WILL I LOVE?



Who will I love?
I don't understand.
If Mommy and Daddy can't love,
I guess nobody can.

Who will I love?
Who will I choose?
I don't think I like this game
'Cause I can't help but lose.

They used to pray with me at bedtime,
And talk to the Father above.
We used to ask Him for so many things,
So why can't we ask Him for love?

What has become of our family?
Why can't it be like it used to be?
What ever happened to
 "happily ever after"
 and the laughter?
Oh, God, if you're still above,
Tell me, who will I love?

—Marty Funderburk

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