

THE CREATION OF MARRIAGE

God's Original Intent for Marriage

The Creation of Marriage

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*This book is dedicated to my loving wife Diane,
My Best Friend.*

He who finds a wife finds a good thing,
And obtains favor from the Lord.

Proverbs 18:22

Teryl Hebert

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FOREWORD

I first met Teryl and Diane Hebert at a New Year's Eve party in 1991. I was a new Christian and newly engaged. Little did I know that our first meeting would start a relationship that has helped me in my walk with God and with my wife. My first impression of Teryl was that he really knew and loved to talk about the Bible. Many years later, those first impressions have been proven out. Not only that he talked Bible, but walked it as well. My wife and I were both unprepared for the challenges we were to face in our marriage as we walked through life together. Teryl and Diane have been with us and walked with us every step of the way and the principles in this book have been instrumental in our marriage. I was so excited to hear that this book was going to be written because I know from firsthand experience that it will help marriages. Marriages are in trouble today and the institution of marriage is being attacked today like never before. So many voices are defining and redefining marriage but this book is a clear call back to God's Word and His definition of marriage. I challenge every reader of this book to look at their marriage in the light of God's word and let Him fix all that is broken. This book, though challenging, is a great resource and will help every married couple that reads it.

Danny Allen

INTRODUCTION

Falling in Love

I fell in love with Diane White in 1976, she was only fifteen and I was seventeen. She had just won a place on the cheerleading squad at Central High School and she was looking good!

I remember congratulating her for winning her place on the team, and I was trying to be so cool. I said to her, "congrats baby," I thought that I was sounding so good but looking back...well there is just no do-overs in awkward teenage things. But it must have worked because we began to kind of see each other from that time forward. You know the game, where you try to have a commitment without saying it and putting heavy pressure on the assumption that the other person knows what you are thinking or wanting to say?

Oh the lengths that we go to try to be cool! Cool is just a modern word for pride and pride has the same effects on communication that a pair of vice grip pliers has on the tongue. You just can't say what you would and should say because you are trying to be cool. I'm really hatin' on cool right now because of the problems that "coolishness" would eventually bring into our relationship.

Jealous

Diane and I truly did fall in love in 1976 but our communication skills were very hindered by pride, jealousy, and insecurities (more cloaked terms for cool). Our relationship began on good terms and for the most part we were like most goo-goo eyed, love

struck teens. We talked on the phone every chance we got. We didn't have cell phones then, we didn't even have cordless phones in the house. We had to talk on a phone that was within earshot of the rest of the family so we whispered sweet nothings to one another so that our families couldn't over hear us. We really felt like technology had set us free when they invented phone cords that were twenty feet long allowing us to escape to another part of the house, to continue our love whispering.

I graduated from high school in the spring of '76 and began my career as a heavy equipment operator in August. About the time that I started working, Diane went back to school and my mind went back to school with her. The memories of how I flirted with every girl that I could while I was in school, made me believe that every guy at Central was flirting with my girl while I was working. This drove me wild with jealousy, so I began to drive her wild with my jealous questions.

Our phone conversations that were once sweet whispers became sour shoutings, I was accusing her and she was defending herself and we were both so fiercely competitive that our fights began to resemble a mixed martial arts match. We fought without restraints, we verbally went for the jugular every chance that we could. Little did we know that our words were inflicting wounds that were humanly impossible to heal?

As I said at the beginning, Diane and I really did fall in love in 1976, even though I know that what I just described could cause you to believe the opposite. Our problem was not love, our problem was lack of trust, especially on my part. I know that she had her issues but mine were worse and I would bring out the worst in her.

Once we began arguing in such an unrestrained way it became a regular habit. We were drawn to each other because of love but now a wedge that had distrust at the cutting point, and offences at the broad end, was being driven between us. With each argument that wedge became broader and broader driving us apart. To add to this tension she eventually went off to college and I went full into the party life complete with all of the things that go with it, drugs, sex, and rock-n-roll, not necessarily in that order.

The Wages of Sin is Death

That whole party life is such a lie! I ran wide open into every kind of sin you could think of, but the more I sinned, the emptier I became. Like the prodigal son of the Bible, I squandered all that I had including my high school sweetheart. I was dying inside and everything that I touched seemed to have the same death sentence on it. The Bible always proves true, "For the wages of sin is death...," and sin had me...us...and our relationship in a death grip.

Early in 1981, I began to come under heavy conviction from the Lord. I had forsaken everything that my parents and family life had taught me and I had totally lost my way.

Jesus says that, "*No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.*" (John 6:44).

I didn't understand this at first, but the conviction that I was under was actually the Holy Spirit drawing me to the Lord. I was raised Roman Catholic and attended church almost every Sunday until I was about eighteen years old. So I always believed in God, I be-

lieved that Jesus was the Son of God, and I believed in the Holy Spirit. We made confessions of this all of my life but my soul was still being strangled by the tentacles of sin that were working death in me.

But the Gift of God is Eternal Life

Surely the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord!!! In August of 1981 the Lord brought me to the cross. He opened the eyes of my understanding to the fact that my sins killed Jesus. When I understood this, my heart broke at the thought of my sinful life causing Jesus to die on the cross. As I wept, it seemed as though my tears were carrying my sins out of my darkened heart. Then the love of God began to fill me up displacing death with life. My soul had been so full of anger, jealousy, rage, bitterness, and hate, but now I was being filled with love, joy, and peace. That day, I died with Him, the man I used to be was buried with Him, and I was like a new born baby, born again with a new life in Christ. My conversion took place on August 6, 1981, and now I can say without any reservations, being born again was the best thing that has ever happened to me.

The Second Best Thing

Being born again was the best thing but the second best thing was what God did afterward. As He was restoring me to Himself, He also began to restore Diane and I to one another. At first it was slow, she didn't trust me, and rightfully so, but with one successful encounter after another she began to realize that something truly had changed in me.

But she had a battle to go through also. While I was getting full of the devil in the party life, she was getting full of the devil in the university life, in the form

of humanism. Let me say here that sin is sin, no matter what flavor it is, the wages of sin is death. I took full responsibility for the problems that our relationship had early on so I just assumed that now that I was a Christian things would be better, but I was wrong. Diane was sweet, kind, loving, caring, nurturing, funny, and I could go on but there was one problem, she was not born again.

In the year following my conversion our relationship was restored and we were married on August 7, 1982. The love that we experienced at the beginning of our relationship was back and even better. However, the source of my change was Christ and His Word came first and foremost to me. I knew that if my relationship with Him was not nurtured that I had absolutely nothing to give to Diane. It was my pursuit of understanding His Word that became the catalyst for the new tensions in our relationship.

I studied the Word of God everyday and prayed on my own. In addition to this, I went to a men's Bible study that met on Thursday nights. We were all zealous for the Word and would stay up very late at night, a few times we even stayed up all night. This upset Diane so much that she would protest my attendance to the study. I remember how it would grip my insides when she began to resist me. I wouldn't fight with her but instead I would go get alone and pray for her. I would beg God to show her what He was showing me. I asked Him to do the same work in her life that He was doing in mine. I made it known in heaven that I could not do this without her!

Diane testifies to this day about the conviction that she was under at that time, her humanism was being shaken at its foundations. Then one night after I left to go to Bible study, she asked the Lord to show her what

He was showing me, and God took her to the cross. He showed her the crucifixion of Christ and made her deal with her sins there and she too was born again. One day while we were driving down the road I remember her saying, "I think that I'm born again," and I said, "I think you are." After six turbulent years of dating and one volatile year of marriage we were finally truly together. Christ is the best thing that ever happened to us and our marriage is the second best thing. Without Him we can do nothing but with Him nothing is impossible.

Building on the Rock

On August 7th, 2012, we celebrated our thirtieth wedding anniversary. We have gone through so much in our blessed life as Christians and pastors and rarely do we even disagree any more. We are more in love today than we ever were and it just keeps getting better!

It seems like I should write "The End" here but this is where this book begins. We have learned so much about ourselves and marriage from God's Word that we wanted to share the revelations that we have learned with everyone.

Jesus said in Luke 6:46-49, *"But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say? Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like: He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock] But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great."*

The key to a good house (life/home/marriage) is a good foundation. The only enduring foundation is the Rock of Christ. This book is all about the foundational principles of marriage found in the Bible. These principles have transformed our lives and our marriage and we truly believe that they will do the same for all who will hear and do the Word of the Lord. We pray that the things written in this book will transform your life and marriage in the same way that God has transformed us.

Grace and Peace,

Teryl and Diane Hebert

1

THE BEGINNING OF THE CREATION OF GOD

On January 1, 2001 God gave me a word for our church. He put this simple little phrase of Scripture in my heart, "...the beginning of the Creation of God."

The Lukewarm Age Begins

This passage is found in the book of Revelation 3:14-16, "*And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, 'these things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.'*"

I believe that on January 1st 2001 we officially entered the Laodicean Church Age. This period of time will be marked by such severe apathy and lethargy that it will literally make God sick of the people of this age.

It's interesting to note that the word "Laodicea" means the rule or will of the people. This word perfectly defines where America is as a democratic society. America was originally designed as a constitutional

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republic with a democratic election process. But this democracy has eroded the pillars of the constitution and the majority of public opinion has begun to rule this country. Much like the condition of Israel in the book of Judges 21:25, "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes." When enough people feel that something is right in their own sight they can undermine the constitution and throw off any authority that may have once ruled them.

The same is true with the churches of our day. When enough people feel a certain way, they put away the Bible causing the rule or will of the people to trump the Lordship of Christ. The American Church has cast off so much restraint that I felt prompted to return our church to the simplicity of things as they were in the beginning of creation. I believe that the principles of creation are unchangeable. Therefore it seems the safest harbor to weigh our anchors in during this time of such rapid departure by so many from the Word of God.

So what does all of that have to do with marriage? I'm glad you asked! The book of Revelation is not the only place where the phrase "the beginning of the creation of God" is used, it's just the first place that the Holy Spirit led me to look. Another place that this passage is used in the Bible is in the books of Mark and Matthew. Both places record the same account of an encounter between Jesus and some religious leaders. Let's look at Mark's gospel concerning this clash between Jesus and the Pharisees.

Marriage in the beginning of Creation

Mark 10:1-12, "Then He arose from there and came to the region of Judea by the other side of the Jordan. And multitudes gathered to Him again, and as He was accustomed, He taught them again. The Pharisees came and asked Him, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" testing Him. 3 And He answered and said to them, "What did Moses command you?" They said, "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce, and to dismiss her." And Jesus answered and said to them, "Because of the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept. But from the beginning of the creation, God 'made them male and female.' For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh"; so then they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate." In the house His disciples also asked Him again about the same matter. So He said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery."

In verse six, Jesus uses the same phrase that we read in Revelation 3:14, "the beginning of the creation of God." The thing that gets my attention here is that He is using this phrase as a reference to marriage in the creation. Most of this book will be a study of everything that I could find in the very beginning of creation recorded in the book of Genesis pertaining to marriage. But for now, I want this first chapter to dissect the exchange between Jesus and the Pharisees that led Christ to point us to the story of creation to fully understand marriage.

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Moses gave us Divorce

The Pharisees came to Jesus testing Him to see where He stood on the subject of divorce, which seemed to be a hot topic even then. It must have been the presence of Jesus that made them uncomfortable about their own divorces, as it should in our day as well.

I want to point out that in verse two the King James Version of the Bible uses the phrase “put her away” instead of divorce. The Greek word that is used here is “apoluo” and it means to free fully. That is, to relieve, release, dismiss, or divorce. And while I am defining terms the Greek word for divorce is “apostasion” and it means something separative. This is where we get the term “apostasy” from which means to defect from the truth, fall away, or forsake. This term is specifically used to depict those who put God away. And since marriage was created by God and designed to be permanent, I believe that we have to first put God away in order to put our spouses away!

Jesus in turn asked them what Moses had to say on the subject. They were quick to give Him a direct quote that seemed to show that they had God’s law on their side.

The passage that they were referencing is found in the book of Deuteronomy 24:1-4, *“When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house, when she has departed from his house, and goes and becomes another man’s wife, if the latter husband detests her and writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her as his wife, then her former*

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husband who divorced her must not take her back to be his wife after she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before the LORD, and you shall not bring sin on the land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance."

The certificate of divorce was originally a document declaring that the person being served was innocent and the one who was filing the divorce was "putting the other away." Notice in verse two she is lawfully free to marry another because she did nothing wrong. She was rejected for not finding favor in her husband's eyes. I know that the language is all pointed toward men putting their wives away in this passage but in Mark 10:11, Jesus points out that women also were putting their husbands away.

I believe that the term in our present day would be "irreconcilable differences." What could possibly cause two people who were once crazy in love with one another to come to a place where they have "irreconcilable differences"? Jesus pointed to only one reason...

Hardness of Heart

Jesus' reply to the idea of a "certificate of divorce" was to reveal the root cause of all divorce which is the hardness of hearts. What is this condition that could so ill affect a relationship to the point of no recovery? And how could a married couple's hearts get into this condition? Let's see what the Bible has to say about what causes hearts to become so hardened.

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No Fear of the Lord

Proverbs 28:14, *"Happy is the man who is always reverent, But he who hardens his heart will fall into calamity."*

The reverent person is one who continually walks in the fear of the Lord. The King James Version of the Bible actually says, *"Happy is the man that feareth alway: but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief."*

The word mischief means evil, calamity, trouble, adversity... and the list goes on. In other words, mischief is not good. Walking in the fear of the Lord will keep our hearts soft and pliable toward the Lord and people. This will keep us from the calamity of divorce.

When we stubbornly resist the commandments of the Lord, little by little our hearts become calloused toward Him. Eventually we will lose all feeling (especially love) and this hardened condition will lead us to all sorts of calamity.

Divorce has become so common place in our society that many don't even consider it a "calamity." But when we look at the repercussions that come in the wake of divorce it is catastrophic! Consider the damage done to the couple that is rejecting one another leaving deep mental and emotional wounds. Consider also the hardship it brings on the children, not to mention the financial ruin it brings. And all of this because of a hard heart!

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Religion

Mark 3:1-6, "And He entered the synagogue again, and a man was there who had a withered hand. So they watched Him closely, whether He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him. And He said to the man who had the withered hand, "Step forward." Then He said to them, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" But they kept silent. And when He had looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts, He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other. Then the Pharisees went out and immediately plotted with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him."

Notice the source of Jesus' anger in verse five, He was grieved with the hardness of their hearts. Who was His anger directed toward, religious people who had no compassion on the sick? They only wanted their religious rules to be kept, they could care less about the well being of people. Christianity is NOT a religion it is a RELATIONSHIP with God AND with people! There are people all over the world who practice "Christian Religion" who are going straight to hell! They only love their religion not God or people. This is why so many "Christian" couples end up in divorce. They are zealous for religious practices while being void of the "Royal Law of Love" (James 2:8). In other words they have the letter of the law but they miss the Spirit of the law. They have the external look of religious compliance but internally they are falling apart. Yet people still act surprised when church going folks get divorced. Religion always looks on the outward appearance while ignoring the signs that the heart is growing harder and harder.

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Unbelief

In Mark 16:14, we find the next issue that causes the hardening of our hearts which is unbelief. *“Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen.”*

In this case, Jesus was giving His disciples a proper chewing out because they refused to believe. Unbelief was the cause of their hearts being hardened, in particular they were hardened toward the miracle of Christ’s resurrection from the dead! They didn’t believe in miracles even after witnessing all of the miracles contained in the gospels. We should let this be a stern warning to us. If unbelief could plague the original eleven it could happen to us also.

I have personally witnessed many marriages that were DOA, but when the same Spirit who raised Christ from the dead touches that marriage it comes to life again!!! The world buries the dead, Christians are commanded to raise the dead!!! No matter how bad your marriage may look God can still raise it from the dead!

Hardened Through Sin

Consider what Paul says in Hebrews 3:12-13, *“Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called “Today,” lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.”*

This passage shows us clearly the path to a hard heart. The first step toward a hardened heart is the deceitfulness of sin. Sin will deceive you into thinking you can live in the fleshly pleasures of sin and still be

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in good standing with God, but sin is a liar! Sin separates you from God!

The next step to a hard heart is unbelief. In order to practice sin you have to cease believing that God will punish ALL sin. Many today have made up a new god in their own minds to justify their sins, this is the age old practice of idolatry. Idolatry, is serving a god that man made instead of serving the God that made man. While this may make them feel better about themselves it does not deliver them from sin or death. The wages of sin is death and once death has its grip on a person it will then begin to kill a marriage.

The final stage of a hardened heart is to depart from the living God and begin to serve ourselves. This is the seed bed for divorce, and as I said before, first we depart from God, and then we depart from our spouses.

Repentance is the Cure

The last passage that I would point out concerning hardness of heart is one that seems harsh, yet gives us hope.

Romans 2:4-5, "Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God..."

If your heart is hard toward your spouse you can believe it was hard toward God first. The cure is repentance which means to change the way you think. Repentance is like preparing a field for planting, God

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plows the fallow ground of our hardened hearts with His Word, making us receptive to His truth and love.

Repentance is a great part of God's grace that is largely overlooked or grossly misrepresented by modern churches. Repentance always precedes forgiveness. However, many today have sadly neglected this great gift of God's kindness that allows us to make the necessary changes to salvage our relationship to Him and our spouses. It's in the process of changing our minds that our hearts are changed too. As we repent of the anger, resentment, unforgiveness, etc... that we are harboring toward God and our spouses our hearts will become soft and pliable again. I heard a young man say recently that, "you didn't stop loving, you stopped repenting." In order to maintain any relationship we must remain willing to change.

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After Jesus pointed out that hard heartedness was the root cause of divorce, He then introduces the subject of this book. In Mark 10:6-9 we read, "*But from the beginning of the creation, God 'made them male and female.' 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'; so then they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.*"

If you have had any exposure to the Bible you can probably see that in this short reference to the book of Genesis several principles pertaining to marriage are mentioned. And I can assure you that there are many, many more. Jesus is implying that we have drifted so far from our Creator and our created purpose that we have lost our way and our homes in the process.

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In the beginning God created a place then inhabited it with people to enjoy His creation and one another. If we are going to be successful in marriage that was created by God, we must keep the Creator in the center of our hearts and our homes. This book will examine all of the principles of marriage found in the first four chapters of the book of Genesis. As we discover these truths together may they soften your heart and return you to a fresh love for your Creator and for your spouse.

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2

LET THERE BE LIGHT

Created by the Creator

If we believe in creation we must believe in a Creator. Keep in mind that we are talking specifically about the creation of marriage. In God's order He always creates a structure before He gives life. For instance, He formed man's body then He breathed life into it. In the case of creation itself He formed the earth and then created marriage. In other words, the glorious act of marriage is to be performed on the grand stage of God's creation. All of creation is the structure and marriage is the life that fills it. All who witness the act of marriage should stand in awe of it and give glory to the one who authored and directed this masterpiece.

God Created

The Bible begins with a bang! Not a "big bang theory" but with the powerful voice of God speaking from a dimension that we don't understand.

Genesis 1:1-3, *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light."*

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In verse one God created the heavens and the earth period. I emphasize period because that was the end of the creation of the heavens and the earth. We had a complete structure. In verse two the earth was now without form and void. Something happened to the heavens and the earth between verses one and two. Verse two goes on to say that darkness was on the face of the deep. Apparently God had destroyed His original creation with a great flood, not to be confused with the flood of Noah which comes later.

What I have just described is known as "The Gap Theory." This means that there was a gap between verses one and two of Genesis where God destroyed His original creation and then begins another. There is no time frame given so it could be thousands and even millions of years. This explains lots of science that says that the earth is millions of years old. It gives place for dinosaurs and even cave men. This would refute all of the evolutionists and big bangers who try to claim that creation came out of an explosion and people came from tadpoles.

I must admit that evolutionists have more faith than I have. I have only witnessed destruction coming out of explosions, not order, so it's hard for me to believe that the heavens and the earth came out of a giant cosmic explosion. That would be like saying, "We caused a nuclear explosion and a city was created out it." You have to be so smart that you are insane to believe that, yet it is being taught in our schools and universities like it's a fact.

My point is this, marriages are failing. People are fleeing from marriage because they are fleeing from God, they really don't believe in God. Even people who say that they believe in God, live like they don't! Remember, what you do, not what you say, is what you

really believe. We are living today like there is no God. Or worse, many believe that man is god, and this is affecting our relationships to one another, especially as pertaining to marriage.

Ecclesiastes 12:1, "Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, before the difficult days come, and the years draw near when you say, "I have no pleasure in them."

How can we remember our Creator if He is not etched into our memories? We must first "member" Him before we can "remember" Him. We are living in a society that has nearly been scrubbed clean of any reference to our Creator. Sadly, we and our children are growing up in a world today having been trained by atheists, antagonists, evolutionists, and humanists, making our upbringing nearly void of God. These are all saying in unison, "there is no God." And when difficult days come we have no strength to endure them. Human strength is quickly depleted in relationships, remember, "We love Him because He first loved us." Unless we are connected to the source of love which is God Himself, our humanity is quickly exhausted and so are our relationships to others.

We Need Faith in God

Hebrews 11:3 says, "By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible."

A few verses later in Hebrews 11:6 it says, "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him."

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By faith we believe that the worlds were framed by God's Word! Faith simply believes that God exists and that He rewards those who seek for Him by faith. We need faith to be married! We need faith to believe that the Divine Creator created the earth as a place to live out the holy institution of marriage. We need faith to believe that all who enter this holy enterprise are to use their marriages to bring glory to the One who created us! Without faith it is impossible to please the Creator as we try to live in His creation.

Let There Be Light

For whatever reason, God destroyed the first earth with a flood. Then He began a "re-creation" in verse three, "*Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.*"

Now I want us to look at the creation of light and how it pertains to relationships. It takes some time to make a good Biblical case, so stay with me while I put numerous passages of Scripture together to help you get a ***revelation of relationships***.

First I want to point out the fact that God spoke and light was created. I want to place heavy emphasis on the fact that God's Word has the ability to create something out of nothing. God spoke and it was!

Next I want you to see that the sun, moon, and stars, were not created until the fourth day, (Genesis 1:14-19). So the Bible is not talking about natural lights but a supernatural light. So what is this light?

The Lamb Slain From the Foundation of the World

In the Book of Revelation 13:8 we find an unusual phrase, *“All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”*

In the end times all will worship a great beast because they were not identified in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. We are nearer to the end times than ever before and the apostasy that I described in the first chapter due to atheists, evolutionists, and humanists, have done a number on mankind. This will cause men in the last days to worship something or someone other than our Creator. Reader be warned!

The Bible says that the Lamb was slain before the foundation of the world. We are discussing the foundation or creation of the world but the Lamb was slain prior to this. So what does this mean and what does it have to do with light and marriage?

Without a doubt the “Slain Lamb” is a reference to the crucifixion of Jesus the Christ the Son of the Living God. But we know that His crucifixion was approximately four thousand years after Genesis 1:3. So how could He be slain before the world began?

The Sons of God Shouted For Joy

I want us to read a powerful excerpt from the book of Job. Job is one of the oldest known manuscripts and possibly the oldest book in the Bible. It’s a book that describes the plight of a man named Job who was suffering for no apparent reason. Then three of his

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friends came to see him and they have a running dialogue as to whether Job was a righteous man or a sinner. Finally, God shows up and resolves the matter.

In Job 38:1-7 we read, *“Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said: “Who is this who darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Now prepare yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer Me. “Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements? Surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? To what were its foundations fastened? Or who laid its cornerstone, When the morning stars sang together, And all the sons of God shouted for joy?”*

God demands an answer from Job because He apparently doesn't approve of Job's line of reasoning and even less of Job's friends. We should all beware of our own lack of understanding of our Creator and His creation in our own communications.

God's first argument was to point out that Job was a man (verse 3) and he was now going to have to answer to God, as we all will.

God's first question strikes at the heart of Job's pride, where was man when God was creating him and the earth? That puts everything in perspective. We are the creature and He is the Creator, we should never blur that line!

God points out man's absence when He laid the foundation of the earth. Now let's blend our two points, remember that the Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world. God is describing the earth's foundation then He asks what the foundation of the earth was secured to? Finally He points out what I

want you to see. When the foundations of the earth were laid all of the hosts of heaven began to shout for joy!!! What was the reason for heaven's jubilee?

Remember, God said, "Let there be light...," the light of the world is the revealing of God's plan for the redemption of His creation. Before the world was ever formed and before man was on the earth, God knew that man would sin against Him. Before the problem ever occurred God created the solution. At the proper time during the age of the earth, God would send His sinless Son to die as a substitute sacrifice for all of mankind. In the mind of God the crucifixion of Christ was finished before the world was started!

When God revealed this plan to all of the hosts of heaven it prompted a celebration as the sons of God shouted for joy as the brilliance of our Creator's wisdom was revealed.

When God said, Let there be light, He revealed the cross of Christ as the light of the world. The entire foundation of the creation is fixed on this and revolves around it. The cross of Christ is the beginning and centerpiece of all creation!

Defining Light

When the Apostle John wrote his account of the life of Jesus Christ he began the writing by retelling the creation story.

In John 1:1-9 we read, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and

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the darkness did not comprehend it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world."

John tells us that the Word co-existed with God before the world began. In John 1:14, John defines this very clearly, "*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*" Without a doubt Jesus is the Word of God. All things were made by Jesus and for Jesus.

Verse four tells us that the life of Jesus is the light of men. This supports the entire case that I have been building concerning the creation of light. The Light that shined on day one of creation is the revelation of the life of Jesus.

The Bible says that God is light, (I John 1:5). Jesus said that He was the Light of the world, (John 8:12), and He also said that we are the light of the world (Matthew 5:14-16).

Now I want to show you a definition of light that I believe is absolutely vital for the health of our marriages and all relationships.

In I John 1:5-7 we read, "*This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. if we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.*"

In verse five we find that God is light. Those who walk in God do not walk in darkness. It's interesting to note that these passages do not define darkness but they do define light. In verse seven we learn that to walk in the light means to walk in fellowship with ONE ANOTHER! Could we conclude then that to walk in darkness is to walk (go through life) without relationships or closed off to relationships? Could it mean that we keep our inward life hidden from others, especially from God and those who have a relationship with Him? And since we are asking questions, if walking in the light guarantees that the blood of Jesus will cleanse us from sin, will walking in darkness void that great promise?

In John 3:16-21 we find one of the best known Bible verses yet one of the most unknown revelations, *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. “He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.”*

John 3:16 is one of the most widely quoted verses from the Bible. Many rightfully take comfort in the fact that God loves us so much that He sent Jesus to restore us back to eternal life, but the verses that follow focus on the idea of condemnation. Condemnation comes be-

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cause light came into the world and men preferred darkness because light exposes their evil deeds.

Ephesians 5:13 says it this way, *“But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light.”*

The light of relationship reveals things. So much so that I believe that those who are used to hiding their evil deeds are shocked when they are exposed to relationships. This is why many today prefer non-relational churches. They want the promise of heaven without loving relationships on earth, they go to church yet they walk in darkness (no relationships).

Nowhere is this principle clearer than in marriage. When we live with someone they will soon know almost everything about you. This will either be a good thing or a nightmare. Sadly today, the discovery of how our other half lives is too often ending up as a nightmare.

I want you to remember this revelation of light as we go through this book. I took considerable time to make this point knowing all the while that I was at risk of losing your attention. I will try when possible to be much more pointed about the issues of marriage, but some of these points take time to establish. The light of relationship will be so much at the heart of all that we discuss throughout the remainder of this book I thought it was worth the pains to define this revealing revelation.

3

THE IMAGE OF GOD

A Place for His People

The very beginning of the creation was the creation of light. In our last chapter we discovered that the light in creation is the revelation of the cross of Christ. And that light could also be defined as a *RELATIONSHIP* with God *AND* with God's people. God created light and that was the end of the first day.

On day two God made the first heaven or the sky. This is the atmosphere that surrounds the earth. That was the end of day two.

The third day seemed a little busier than the first two. First God separated the waters from dry land and then He named the dry land Earth and the waters He called the Sea. Next He commanded the earth to grow grass that contained seed within itself. Those seeds would be self regenerating. With that the third day ended.

We briefly discussed day four in chapter two, remember that was the day that He made the sun and the moon and the stars. He placed these celestial fixtures into the atmosphere that He created on day two. These

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heavenly bodies contain signs that actually bear witness of our Creator to us, Psalm 19:1 says, "*The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork.*" They would also determine the seasons of the earth. And finally, they would make distinctions for day and night, and days and years. Wow, day four was a busy day!

On the fifth day, God commanded the seas to be filled with all forms of aquatic life including whales. He also created all manner of birds that would fly freely in the atmosphere. He then blessed the fish and the fowl and commanded them to be fruitful and multiply filling the seas and the air. End day five.

And on the sixth day God created all manner of livestock and animals. These animals were to reproduce after their own kind. That was on the morning shift but He was saving His best work for later in the day.

And the last great act of creation also took place on the sixth day. God created man in His image. This will be the subject of this entire chapter but first let me comment on the six days of creation prior to the creation of man.

As I said before in chapter two, in God's order He always creates a structure and then He fills it with life. He made the atmosphere then filled it with birds. He made the seas and filled them with fish. He made the land with grass then filled it with animals. God built a fantastic dwelling place but saved the pinnacle of His creation until the last act of the sixth day. He created a place then He created mankind in His image to rule over His creation. The world is truly a stage and the stars of the show are those who bear His image and bring Him glory!

Let Us Make Man in Our Image

I want to include the passages of Scripture that tell of the creation of man in its entirety. It's found in Genesis 1:26-31, "*Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth." And God said, "See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food. Also, to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which there is life, I have given every green herb for food"; and it was so. Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.*"

There are four major points in these passages that I want us to discuss because they give us understanding about our created origins. Chapter one of Genesis is a macro view of God's creation, in chapter two of Genesis we get a micro view. So the things that we point out about chapter one will be more clearly defined as they are discussed again in chapter two. However, sometimes in order to make our points concerning chapter one it will be necessary to blend in those overlapping issues from chapter two.

The four things that I want us to key in on are these. First, we are created in His image. Second, we were

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given dominion over all of creation. Third, we are created male and female. Fourth and finally, we are commanded to be fruitful and multiply. We will need a full chapter to discuss each of these because they have such a profound impact on how we relate to each other in our marriages. The remainder of this chapter will focus on man in God's image. Then in each of the next three chapters I will remind us of these four issues so we don't lose focus on our subject.

In God's Image

Man is created in God's image! No one has ever seen God so what does that even mean? The Old Testament was written in Hebrew so I would like for us to examine the Hebrew word that was used here for "image." The Hebrew word is "tselem." According to the Hebrew dictionary of the Strong's concordance the word means shade or shadow; a phantom, i.e. illusion, resemblance; hence a representative figure.

That may define a word but it still doesn't clearly cause us to understand what it means to bear the image of God. One important fact about the word "tselem" is that the overwhelming use of the Hebrew term "tselem" in the Bible is used to define an idol. Idols are man's attempt to create God. God created us in His image and strictly forbids us from trying to make an image of Him.

Mirror Images

When we look into a mirror we see a reflection that bears our image, the higher the quality of the mirror the clearer the reflected image. We should never confuse the reflected image with the object. Man is designed to stand in God's presence and reflect His image and His glory in the earth! Blurring the lines

between the image (man) and the object (God) has always been a problem, and that problem is idolatry.

In Romans 1:16-32 the problem of idolatry is thoroughly discussed, you may want to take a moment right now and read the whole passage. But I will only point out verses 21-25, *“because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.”*

Changing God’s glory into the image of man or any other created thing is the problem. We must worship the Creator not the creature.

Let me inject here that the image of God is not defined in the physical body of mankind. The Bible says in John 4:24, *“God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”* God is a Spirit. The physical body of man was not mentioned until Genesis 2:7, *“And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.”* We will discuss the physical body later in this book. For now I want to point out that God breathed life into the body of man and man became a living being or soul.

We are spiritual beings and that is where the image of God is truly seen. We have an eternal spirit and soul housed in a temporary physical body. Our physical bo-

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dies are made from the earth by the hands of God. Our spirit and soul were breathed into us by the mouth of God from the very lungs of God. One breath from God perpetuated breath in all of mankind, God breathed and man lived. He breathed once into one man and from that one breath an innumerable multitude of men has continued to breathe countless breaths sustaining life for all of mankind!

As I said before, we are at our core, spiritual beings but we are housed in fleshly bodies. Sadly we tend to pay more attention to the flesh than to the spirit. If we are to have successful marriages we are going to have to first recognize the spiritual side of ourselves. Our spiritual origin is so neglected now that if we could see the condition of the spirit and souls of men they would look like emaciated victims of famine. This all began at the fall of man.

The Fall of Man

In Genesis 2:15-17 God gave man a commandment, *“Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”*

Man was placed in the Garden of Eden and given full freedom to enjoy all of God’s creation. But God strictly forbid him to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Then God warned the man that if he were to eat from it he would die. This is the first time that death is mentioned in the Bible. Prior to this commandment death was not even an issue. I believe that we were designed to live forever and that is why the earliest men in the Bible lived to be several hun-

dred years old. The thing that brought death into the world was disobedience to God's commandment. Another word for this is simply, sin.

In Genesis 3:1-7 we find the account of man sinning against God's commandment. *"Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'" Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings."*

Now we have a new player on stage with the man and the woman, the serpent, or the devil. The devil tempted the woman by distorting through lies the things that God had actually said. The lie was that you would not die if you ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Instead, she would become like God.

There are things that God forbids us to know! Yet we always seem to desire to eat of forbidden fruit. Today we continually ingest death into ourselves by feeding on knowledge that God never intended for us to have. We are living in the information age, the Bible says that *"...Knowledge puffs up..."* (I Corinthians 8:1a),

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our heads are being over inflated with knowledge while our spirits are starving.

Eve ate from the tree of knowledge and gave some to her husband. The first sin was within the framework of the marriage. That sin was to feast on carnal knowledge while ignoring spiritual communion with God and with each other. While we are filling ourselves with television, internet, cell phones, texting, face booking, twittering, etc... these are all robbing us of real time in our marriages. The original first couple fell into sin and death by the same trap. The sad thing is that this temptation has been put before men throughout history and we keep falling for the same old trick time and again.

In Genesis 3:21-24 we read the sad conclusion to this story, *“Also for Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them. Then the LORD God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever”— therefore the LORD God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken. So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.”*

Where did the skins come from in verse twenty one? Many believe that God killed two animals to cover the sins of the man and the woman. Then He banished them from the garden and from His presence. There is no sin in God and those in sin cannot truly reflect the image of God. So they were driven from His presence. That day they died spiritually, and their bodies began to decay. Sin had entered the world and death was passed on to all men. Sin tarnished God’s image in the earth

and now God would reveal His glory by restoring His image in fallen man.

Restoring God's Image

I once heard a preacher ask this question, "Did it ever occur to you that nothing ever occurred to God?" Man's sin did not catch God by surprise! He knew this and had already solved the problem before it happened. Remember we already discussed that the Lamb of God was slain before the foundation of the world. God's remedy for sin had already been settled before sin ever took place.

In the book of Hebrews 1:1-3 we learn a powerful truth about Jesus, "*God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,...*"

Jesus is the "express image" of God! He is an exact reflection of what God intended all men to be! When man fell into sin he was banished from God's presence because he no longer properly reflected God's image. When Christ came into the world He came to restore all mankind to a sinless state that could perfectly represent God in the earth. The serpent still hates God's image and is doing all that he can to deceive us to continue to mar that image. But hold on dear friend, I believe God wants to restore you and your marriage to a state that would reflect His glory now, in this present time!

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As I said, the serpent hates God's image. When Christ was born the serpent tried to kill Him when he had Herod kill all of the children two years old and younger. But God's image was protected. It wasn't until thirty three years later that the serpent finally was able to fulfill his diabolical desire by crucifying Jesus on the cross. But he could not do it before Jesus was able to walk in this world living the way that God wanted His people to live. He built loving relationships with His friends, healed the sick, cast out devils, raised the dead, the lame would walk, the blind could see, the lepers were cleansed and most of all God was glorified in His life! Little did the serpent know that He was fulfilling God's plan from before the beginning! Jesus was crucified as a substitute sacrifice for all of the sins of mankind. And to all who believe the blood of God's Lamb is able to remove all sin from their life. God wants to restore His image in you and your home!!!

Consider these passages, II Corinthians 4:3-6, "But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake. For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

The devil has done all that he can to blind our hearts and minds to God's plan. The gospel (death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus) is the powerful light that drives the blindness from our hearts and minds revealing the salvation of God. As Christ, who is the image of God, shines His glory into our hearts we can

once again be restored to our original place in creation reflecting God's glorious image!

Romans 8:29-30 says it this way, *"For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified."*

God predestined us to be conformed to the image of His Son. To all that will answer His call and put their faith in the blood of Christ to cleanse them from all sin, He will restore His glory and image in you. The predestined plan of God is to adopt sons and daughters into His family and restore His image in them!

Colossians 3:10, *"and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,"*

Dear reader let these passages of Scripture and so many more encourage you to run to the cross and let God re-create you and your marriage in Christ Jesus! Adam and Eve fell into sin together, so why can't married couples be restored to God's image together? I will close this chapter with one parting verse that will help to encourage you to a full restoration from where we have fallen. It's found in the book of Acts 3:19, *"Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord,"*

Repentance, conversion, and the forgiveness of sins through the blood of Jesus are the keys to returning us to our place in His presence reflecting His glory. In order to have marriages that cooperate with God's created design we must begin with two people whose

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lives have been powerfully recreated in Christ to bear God's image in the earth. In other words, *the first creation principle concerning marriage is that your spiritual life must bear God's image and reflect His glory.*

4

DIVINE ORDER

Let Them Have Dominion...

Let's read Genesis 1:26, "*Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."*

Immediately following the creation of male and female in the image of God, He gave us the authority over creation, but not over one another! Both the man and the woman were given this dominion commandment. This is why we have the drive to compete, be successful, overcome, procreate, and to stay alive. But the fallen nature often tends to misdirect this by trying to have dominion over another person, particularly our spouses. When we turn this competitive authority on one another it often destroys our relationships.

What's Dominion?

The word "dominion" means, to tread down. It further means to prevail or rule over.

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Psalm 115:16 says it this way, *“The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord’s; But the earth He has given to the children of men.”*

This creation attribute in man comes in handy on our jobs as we subdue whatever challenges that are placed before us. It’s wonderful to be able to build things out of materials that we extract from the creation. It’s equally grand to be able to make a meal of fish, game, or livestock. Our dominion nature serves us well when we begin to cultivate the earth and systematically grow fruits or vegetables. I hope your getting the point.

When dominion is properly directed it is a blessing to men but when it is misdirected it is a curse. Our dominion nature is to be used to subdue the earth for the benefits of man. Not to subdue man for the benefits of man. Whenever this dominion nature is misdirected toward another person this is called control. It is a cruel existence to be forced down under the dominating hand of another human being who is trying to make you do his or her will.

Consider the words of Jesus as He taught His disciples about New Testament authority in Matthew 20:25-28, *“But Jesus called them to Himself and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”*

Jesus makes a distinction between His kind of authority and the world’s authority. He then stresses the

point that “...it shall not be so among you”. Since He forbids this, we should make certain that our understanding of Christian authority is to be a servant, not a lord.

Divine Order

Once we are restored to bear God's ***image*** in the earth we must return to God's ***order***. We were created in His image and next we were given dominion over everything with fins, feathers, and feet (animal feet). God's divine order is that mankind would stand in His presence reflecting God's glory while subduing the earth. We would look to Him for direction, guidance, and divine intervention when necessary. The first picture of Divine order is God over man and man over creation. In the New Testament we have a much more specific look at this in the framework of marriage.

Marriage: A Picture of the Church

We find this in Ephesians 5:21-33, “*submitting to one another in the fear of God. Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and*

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of His bones. "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband."

Mutual Submission

The first insight that we have into restoring divine order in our marriages is that we are to be mutually submitted. The Bible tells us that because of what Jesus accomplished on the cross that God made Him the Lord of all.

In Philippians 2:5-11, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Jesus Christ has been given Lordship over all of heaven and earth. Every knee will eventually bow to His Lordship now or in the future, EVERY knee will bow. When we bow our knee to Christ's Lordship it is the first step to restoration of God's divine order.

Christians should be submissive by the nature of the new birth. We were sinful rebels and God had mercy on

us. When we came on bended knees to the cross we humbled our physical postures, our souls, and our hearts in submission to the Lordship of Christ. Jesus became our Lord! He is the boss of our lives. He is our King and we are His subjects.

When I consider “mutual submission” I can’t help but think of those cartoon chipmunks Chip and Dale. They spent all of their time trying to out-polite the other one, “you go first, no no you go first, no I insist you go first...” Their remedy was always, “I know we’ll go together.” We could learn something from that.

I remember before Diane and I were married we dated for six turbulent years, we fought all of the time. We really loved each other but didn’t know how to communicate. She wouldn’t do what I said and I wouldn’t do what she said. It seemed we were always trying to impose our wills on the other. It wasn’t until Christ became Lord of our lives that this was remedied. I no longer wanted impose my will on her nor did she want to impose her will on me. We were both submitted to the Lordship of Christ and His will became the objective of our relationship. Once submitted to Christ we became mutually submitted to one another. Now, after thirty years of marriage there, is rarely a cross word between us. I can testify that mutual submission is the key to divine order in the home.

Wives Submit to Husbands

Diane and I have been marriage counselors for almost as long as we have been Christian. We often get couples in who were previously counseled by their pastor or a Christian counselor of some sort. It never ceases to amaze me as to how many counselors omit mutual submission and jump straight toward telling the women to submit to their husbands. Then I get

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more than a little disturbed at the huge amount of leeway given to the husbands. In other words the husbands can do almost anything they want to and the wives are supposed to submit. I cannot disagree more to this line of counsel. We have had weeping women come to us who have been counseled to submit to just about every type abuse you can imagine. It angers me as I write this and recall so many that we have listened to through their tears as they tell how their pastor told them to quit being rebellious and go home and submit to your abusive husband. If you are a pastor reading this you should stop counseling until you understand what the Bible says on this matter. Nowhere in the Scripture is anyone ever commanded to submit to the devil! I would love to see how those guys would respond to someone physically, mentally, verbally, or sexually abusing them and being told to submit, that's demonic!

I firmly believe that wives are to submit to their own husbands just as the Scripture says. But before I discuss the wife's duty to submit any further I want to jump ahead to the man's duty.

Husband's Love Your Wives

Husbands are commanded not only to love their wives but to love them in the same way that Christ loved the church. So how did Christ prove His love for the church? He DIED for her!!! I will make a deal with any husband right now. I will insist that your wife submit to you right after you die for her!

Husbands you are to give yourself for your wives. 99.9% of all marriage problems will iron themselves out if the husband will just die for his wife. The reason is because God truly did place men as the head of their homes. When men refuse to die to themselves for their

wives they forfeit their anointing and their authority. This leaves the marriage and the home undone and everyone forced to usurp the abandoned role of the derelict husband.

Let me show you some ways that the husbands forfeit their place. First let's re-read Ephesians 5:25-30, *"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.*

The first thing that is accomplished when a husband dies for his wife is that he might sanctify her. The word "sanctify" means to make holy or pure. You see the work of a husband is the work of a PASTOR. It's no wonder so many pastors fall into sexual sin. They are praying with your wives and teaching them the Bible and leading them in spiritual matters, they're doing everything else that you're supposed to do and well... **HUSBANDS THIS IS YOUR JOB NOT SOME PAID PROFESSIONAL!**

The husband is the pastor of his home, you must INITIATE spiritual communication. When is the last time you initiated taking your wife by the hand and leading her in prayer (not counting meal time)? When is the last time you initiated a discussion of Scripture with your wife especially pertaining to seeking God's will for your home? You see husbands, we have left

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this to the women, considering spirituality to be a feminine thing.

Men like to talk about things that they know and most men do not know anything about the Bible. I would encourage every man to get on a Bible reading plan that causes him to read the Bible through every year, this is a good start. Develop a prayer life and get over your fear of praying out loud with your wife. She's seen you physically naked now let her see you spiritually naked.

As we wash our wives with the water of God's Word we will discover a wonderful thing. Instead of worldly talk or deafening silence, we begin to bathe our wives minds and emotions with the assurances that we seek God and that we love her enough to communicate it to them. Our wives will begin to acquire a shining countenance that emanates from a contented heart and soul. Surely she is set apart for God and for you. You are fully hers and she is fully yours, the two have become truly one and it's Wonderful! Corny but I made the point.

Oh Yeah...Wives Submit

When you begin to take the proper spiritual role in your home your wife will think that she just died and went to heaven. When men cooperate with the counsel that I have just written above, it is rare to find a woman not willing to submit to that. But there are the exceptions...

Contentious

Proverbs 21:9, *“Better to dwell in a corner of a housetop, than in a house shared with a contentious woman.”* (He repeats this one in Proverbs 25:24) (With all of Solomon’s wives he was bound to find one of these).

Proverbs 27:15, *“A continual dripping on a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike;”* (This one is also a repeat, poor Solomon).

Proverbs 30:21-23 says, *“For three things the earth is perturbed, Yes, for four it cannot bear up: For a servant when he reigns, A fool when he is filled with food, A hateful woman when she is married, And a maidservant who succeeds her mistress.”*

The root word of “contentious” is “contest.” Remember, God gave us a dominion nature in creation. Often is the case when the husband forfeits his place of authority in the home the woman takes that authoritative role. Then because she is out of order she can’t handle the stress, when this occurs it’s best to live somewhere else because the continual dripping will begin.

My sisters if you were raised in a home where your mother was the boss, your tendency may be to think that is normal because it’s all that you ever saw. The power of observation within a family is a powerful teacher. If your mom dominated the home and became bossy you probably resent your passive dad because he wouldn’t stand up to her. And worse yet, you probably will try to find a man you can dominate and resent and continue this vicious cycle of role reversal. It’s vital that you recognize this and get to the root of your issues. You must take this to the cross and crucify it. Remember, this is deeply ingrained in you and the

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work of the cross has to be equally as deep. Christ allowed Himself to be crucified but He is certainly not passive. He is the risen King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He cannot and will not be dominated. If you are going to be Christian you must begin by surrendering to the Man of all men, our Lord Jesus Christ. Then you must learn submission to His authority. As you do, you will also be able to learn submission to your husband's authority.

Some women can't blame their mommas or daddies, they are just plain mean! If that's the case with you I will refer you to the last part of the advice I gave to the ladies above. Bend your knee to the cross of Christ. Surrender fully to His Lordship and learn how to have a meek and quiet spirit. You must be born again and be restored to what God created you to be. We are being re-created in Christ Jesus. Let Him do His perfect work in you or you will never be fit to be in a relationship with anyone.

Ladies if your husband forfeited his role and forced you to pick it up, you are in a dilemma. Once you take up that role you probably won't like what you become but you will also find it hard to let it go. I can assure you if your husband forfeited his role and has now turned to the Lord he is in a battle to recover what he lost. It's awkward because he is used to you doing his job. And now the position is occupied by you. But it is equally hard because you took up an unnatural role and became something you didn't want to be in the first place, and now you don't trust him to do it the way you are doing it.

The Covenant of Marriage

Once again I would like for us to re-read the end of Ephesians 5:31-33, "*For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.*" *This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.*"

The intent of marriage from the beginning of the creation is that the two would become one. When our homes are out of order it is impossible to achieve this. Let me point out a few things about this covenant.

First, the husband and the wife are in covenant with one another, not their children. Often I see marriages where the children are in authority in the home and this is just as detrimental as when the man or woman is out of order. We will discuss this in greater detail later but for now let's just leave it this way. You are in covenant with your spouse not your kids, one day your kids will leave home and then what? If you are going to raise healthy children it MUST be within the framework of a healthy marriage.

Second, Ephesians 5:21-33 is not talking about marriage. Paul is using marriage to discuss the church. When we become Christian we must learn to be in relationship not only with Christ, but with the body of Christ, which is the church. We have to learn how to be successful in our relationships with one another. Let's admit it, we are failing miserably in our relationships. Our marriages are failing, people change churches like they change supermarkets, our friendships have been reduced to virtual relationships like email, texting, Facebook, Twitter, etc. We stink at rela-

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tionships, yet Jesus told us that all men would know that we (the church) were His disciples by the love that we have for one another. No wonder the world thinks the church is a joke...because it is. In the church we are in a covenant relationship with one another. I believe we fail at marriage because we first fail in our relationships with God and with His people. As I said earlier in this book, we must first put God away before we put our marriages away. **Mutual submission is the key to a great marriage because it is the key to a great church. We are submitted first to the Lord, then to one another. If we get this right in the church we will get this right in our homes.**

Finally, in verse thirty three Paul once again shifts the focus back to marriage. He reemphasizes that husbands are to love their wives and that wives are to respect their husbands. Husbands, let's give our wives something to respect. Wives, be a good helper to him as he tries to do his job. As we restore our marriages back to divine order we must keep our dominion nature submitted to the Lordship of Christ. In doing so we will enjoy unity, love, peace, and joy in our homes.

5

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Sexual Identity

Genesis 1:27, "So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them."

We have already discussed the fact that mankind was created in God's image and that we are to reflect His glory in the earth. Now we must point out that He made them male and female. The outward mark of our identity is sexual. This is much deeper than the obvious physical distinctions between male and female. Not only are we physically different we are spiritually, mentally, and emotionally different as well.

Our professor at the Bible College that I attended called sex "the little giant". It is a small subject when we consider how much time in our lives that we are actually engaged in having sex. But sex is a giant when we consider the time spent thinking about it. This chapter will help us to see how God's design in creating us as sexual beings affects our marriages. When handled properly it is a source of marital bliss. When handled improperly it causes many marriages to fall apart.

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It's Not Good For The Man To Be Alone

In Genesis 2:18-20 we gain some insight to the nature of the man, *"And the LORD God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him." Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name. So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him."*

God's first assessment of man was that he should not be alone. There are several insights that the story of creation gives us concerning man that might help us understand this. First in Genesis 1:26-28, he was created in God's image with a dominion nature, he was sexually male, and commanded by God to reproduce. Next in Genesis 2:7, he was given a physical body made from the dust of the ground. In Genesis 2:8-15, he was given a place with boundaries and a job. In Genesis 2:16-17, he was given a commandment not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Finally we see that he named every creature on the face of the earth, which shows that he was very intelligent and discerning, with a bent toward order. But then, God said that it is not good for man to be alone.

What was man's problem that caused God to say that it is not good for him to be alone? Was it a dominion issue? Was it a sexual reproduction issue? Would he not stay put in the boundaries that God gave him? Was he a workaholic or lazy? Was it a combination of all of the above?

We could probably through speculation, build some solid cases on every point I just mentioned as to why

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God said, that man should not be alone. Whatever the reason or reasons we do know one thing, the cure for his aloneness was a helper comparable to him.

So God began to seek for a helper for the man. He brought every living creature on the earth to the man and he gave names to all of them. But no helper was found among them, Hallelujah!!! Dog is not man's best friend! Neither is any other beast for all that matters! God would now have to create the cure for man's loneliness...

The Creation Woman

Genesis 2:21-25, "And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said: "This is now bone of my bones And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man." Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed."

Now let's examine the Biblical insights that we have so far concerning the woman. We know that she is also created in God's image with a dominion nature. She is sexually female, and she too is given the commandment to reproduce. We know that she was created as a helper for man and that God brought her to the man. And finally we know that her physical body was taken from the man's body.

Woman in her normal state is a helper by nature. She's not a slave but a helper, whose drive to help is fueled by her dominion nature. She is especially good

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at helping in the realm of communication. Remember, she was created as the cure for man's loneliness which would include communication and sexuality. She was made for man, inferring a divine order, man was not made for the woman. God brought her to the man, which seems to indicate that a woman is a gift from God. And finally, we know that her body was taken from the body of man, this would indicate that she is physically weaker.

God caused the man to go into a deep sleep then He removed one of his ribs. From that rib God formed and fashioned His most marvelous masterpiece, woman, (I am prejudiced, speaking from a heterosexual man's perspective). The first thing that the man saw when he aroused from his divine anesthesia was God presenting him with this beautiful gift. What a wakeup call! At first his vision was blurry but as he began to regain his senses we can only imagine how his brain processed what his eye was beholding. He saw God presenting him with a new creature taken from his tender side. There she stood, naked, in all of her glory, she was like him, yet not like him. As he processed that first meeting a divine excitement was pulsating through all of his senses.

Once he finally pulled himself together he said, *"This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."*

Did Adam figure all of that out by himself or did God explain it to him? If Adam understood all of that about the woman with just one observation, it is an indictment of how far mankind fell when he fell. Because the

rest of us are having a hard time figuring man and woman out.

Regardless of whether God explained it or if Adam figured it out on his own one thing is for certain ... the pinnacle of creation is now revealed, man would join his wife and become one with her. He would spend his entire life trying to hug that rib back into the place it was taken from. The purpose of every other created thing was to support this divine union in bringing glory to The Creator.

Naked and Unashamed

After the creation of woman we find an interesting note in Genesis 2:25, *“And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.”*

Before they fell into sin Adam and Eve were naked in the presence of God. I want to point out that she was his wife, and that they were in covenant with one another. Because of that covenant they had every divine right to see one another naked. But after they fell into sin we read quite a different story.

Genesis 3:8-10, *“And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, “Where are you?” So he said, “I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.”*

In innocence man was unashamed of his nakedness in the presence of God. Once Adam and Eve lost their innocence through sin, they were ashamed for God to see them naked, so they hid themselves. ***These days it seems mankind has come back to being naked and***

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unashamed. Even while still in their sins, people flaunt their nakedness, because this generation has a perverted view of who God is. Our world today fits the description of the great whore of Babylon who has a multitude of people under her religious spell.

In Revelation 17:2 we read, “... with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication.”

People today are absolutely drunk on the wine of fornication and it is affecting marriages terribly. Intoxicated people do stupid things and our world is insane from an overdose of fornication. Let me show you how a perverted view of God causes this.

Changing God’s Glory and His Truth

The following passage of Scripture is a lengthy reading but it is imperative to understand this to see the moral decline that is affecting our marriage beds. We touched on this passage earlier but now we will fully expound on it. Please take some time to carefully read and meditate on this.

Romans 1:16-32, “*For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “The just shall live by faith.” For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and*

Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.”

I thoroughly explained the restoration of fallen man back to God’s image in chapter three, so it is not my intention to cover that again here. But I do want to point out that **God’s judgment for perverting the gospel is to blind people with sexual perversion.**

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Throughout the Old Testament there is a strong correlation between idolatry and adultery. Many times we read the phrase, "...*you have gone whoring after other gods...*" God considers it adultery when those that He is in covenant with cheat on Him with other gods. This is why I believe He uses sexual perversion as the judgment against those who pervert the gospel. I once asked a man, "Are you married?" He replied, "No but my wife is." This a sad but true picture of how people are with God. They want Him to be faithful to us while they are free to play the field. Just remember, the devil (idol) will be glad to share you, but the True and Living God will not share!

The Gospel in a nutshell is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ the Son of God, this is God's righteousness revealed to us. Adam and Eve were ashamed of their sin and hid their nakedness. On the other hand, this generation seems to be ashamed of God's righteousness and would rather flaunt their nakedness. This is indicative that they are under the judgment described in Romans chapter one. *When one suppresses this gospel by living a life contrary to the gospel he/she incurs the wrath of God in the form a judgment of blindness on their hearts and minds.*

Verses twenty three and twenty four are describing the kind of people who change God's glory. Instead of bearing the image of the Creator and exalting Him, they exalt the creature, robbing God of His glory and giving glory to men. Another word to describe this is **HUMANISM**. According to verse twenty one, when mankind begins to exalt man over God, man's heart and mind are darkened, **THIS IS THE JUDGMENT!** Once the heart is darkened and the mind becomes futile there is nothing to restrain the regression into sexual sin. God gives them up to sexual uncleanness to dishonor their bodies between themselves.

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In verse twenty five we learn that in order to change God's glory you must also change His truth. This is why I said in the section above called "Naked and Unashamed" that fornication begins by perverting who God is.

Verses twenty six through thirty two show us the full regression into sexual sin. Once God's glory and truth are perverted in the minds of men/women, God gives them over to all sorts of sexual deviation. It begins with dishonoring your body with another person. God intended that one man and one woman would join together in a covenant for life. Fornication is a forbidden relationship that engages in sexual intimacy without being in a covenant.

Let me just provoke your thoughts about how this is affecting our marriages. If a person begins to masturbate (abuse one's self) during puberty, that person could have a habit that is ten to fifteen years old by the time that they are married. Then if fantasy, pornography, and fornication are introduced, they have even more layers of addiction to perversion. Getting married will not cure this problem and may even cause difficulty with real sexual encounters.

Then if that same person begins to "dishonor their body" with someone else they do further damage to their own soul and their future marriage bed.

The apostle Paul said in I Corinthians 6:15-20, "*Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For "the two," He says, "shall become one flesh."* But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him. Flee

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sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's."

The "two become one" even in fornication, not only are they sinning against God and one another, but they sin against their own bodies. It's as though your soul takes a snapshot of whoever you are fornicating with and indelibly prints the image in the heart of your imagination. Another word for this is called a soul tie, and unless these are properly dealt with through repentance and forgiveness at the cross, those forbidden relationships will continue to plague your marriage.

My wife and I have counseled many marriages that come to us with a story that goes something like this. We used to have lots of great sex before we got married but now we are struggling. You see, even if you are intending to get married, fornication is still sinning against God, your partner, and yourself. Getting married does not cure sin!

The cross is the only cure as you put to death the old person you were and those sinful deeds. If you fornicated with your spouse before marriage you should first get right with God and then ask your spouse to forgive you for sinning against them by dishonoring your bodies with each other. From there God can begin to rebuild your marriage bed in a holy manner. He does this through repentance, which means to change your mind. In other words, you will learn to think properly concerning how you fulfill your sexual needs and desires.

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The next step in God's judgment on those who are ashamed of Him is to give them up to "vile passions". Vile passions or affections are described as women having sex with women and men having sex with men. In both cases God says that they are acting against nature. Homosexuality and lesbianism are rampant in our society today and these vile lifestyles are being portrayed as normal by all modern media. Even now a push is on to make same sex marriage lawful, that's how far America has fallen. If you have been involved with homosexual or lesbian relationships you will bring difficulties into a heterosexual marriage (I refuse to acknowledge same sex marriage) unless you repent and see your sexuality restored to what God intended it to be.

I know that people claim that they are "born this way" and I'm not here to refute that, sin can be passed on through our families. But hear me carefully, God created you male or female, if your physical body is male so is your soul's make up. The same if you are female your soul is female. The problem is that your heart and mind are under a judgment from God. So even if you have transgender tendencies to act effeminate or to cross-dress or even have surgery to change your gender, you will still be tormented. The real surgery that needs to be done is at the cross of Christ. Where you die with Christ, then the old person of sin that you are is buried with Christ, and then you are raised up from the dead a new creature in Christ. You can be fully restored to God's original intended purpose for your life!

Just listen to what the apostle Paul says in I Corinthians 6:9-11, *"Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous,*

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nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God."

Paul describes every kind of sexual deviation in this passage but then he concludes with a word of hope, "*And such were some of you...*" he says this past tense! You can put all sexual sin behind you by being washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of our Lord Jesus and through the power of the Holy Spirit!!!

In II Peter 2:6-9 we find a passage that fits our discussion well, "*and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly; and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds)— then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment,"*

If you are a righteous person being oppressed by the lifestyles of wicked people that surround you, be encouraged. God knows how to deliver you out of your temptations. And I can tell you that the greatest deliverance is the cross and the way to stay delivered is through a healthy marriage.

The Undeclared Bed

We've spent much time examining the sexual sins that plague marriages today. Now let's look at the things that God has intended for our marriages espe-

cially in the sexual aspect of our relationship with our spouses.

Hebrews 13:4, "*Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.*"

God says that our marriage beds are undefiled! There is nothing wrong with married people having sex. As a matter of fact, it is the only way that God condones sexual intercourse.

We have already discussed God's judgment on fornicators but let me share this. I know that today fornication is romanticized by every media outlet going. These "lovers" are portrayed as though they have unbelievable sex 24/7. As a former fornicator who used to bounce from one sexual encounter to another. I can testify that that lifestyle is not all that is portrayed to be. Even a healthy moron can perform a body function! But to have a meaningful relationship is quite another thing. No media is portraying the loneliness and confusion that plagues that lifestyle.

Those same media outlets would have you to believe that marriage is boring and would have all of us married folks envying the sexual encounters of the fornicators. I don't envy them for one minute, been there, done that, and didn't even get a tee shirt.

Unfortunately, many marriages have never learned to have a proper sexual relationship and they do envy the fornicators. If all you do is perform the sex act, then you are only using our spouse for a cheap glandular thrill that is over in minutes, leaving both unfulfilled. This may sustain you for a while when you are young and extremely hormonal, but it won't last.

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I grieve for those who are married yet forfeit all of the benefits of marriage. Their communication is terrible or non-existent and they resent their spouse because they go largely unfulfilled. I have learned something in Christ about having sex that I never understood before I became Christian. Let me show you what I've discovered.

Adam Knew His Wife

In Genesis 4:1 we find an unusual phrase used, "*Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, "I have acquired a man from the Lord."*

When Adam "knew" his wife she conceived and had a baby. I have always thought that the word "knew" or "know" was an unusual term for sexual relations. But now that I have come to understand the importance of communication to sexuality, the more I must say that God chose the perfect word. ***We must see that healthy communication will lead to a healthy sex life.***

The term "know" as pertaining to Adam and Eve's case implies that a heart exchange led to a sexual encounter, he knew her and she conceived. Remember, God said that it was not good for the man to be alone. Now he had someone with him. I am so thankful that the Bible did not say that he had sex with her and she conceived... or the physical act would be the end of it. ***To know means that the man and the woman exercised communication skills in such a way that it led to a meaningful sexual experience.*** Let me say it another way, an intimate heart and soul exchange led to a successful sexual encounter.

Dwell With Them According to Knowledge

In I Peter 3:7 we find a New Testament teaching that seems to draw on this same creation principle, *“Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.”*

We have already established the fact that to “know” meant to have sexual relations. This passage enlarges on the point by using the word “knowledge,” some modern versions of the Bible use the word “understanding” in the place of knowledge. Both words imply that a husband is to study his wife. I mean really think about what she’s saying or how she thinks and acts.

Hey fellas, she is different from you by God’s design, if she was like you she would be a he. God didn’t make a mistake, He made it a challenge for us to **COMMUNICATE** with her! We need to learn to embrace the differences between us and learn to enjoy, not resent them. Remember, it’s not good for the man to be alone and this is God’s remedy for your reluctance to communicate.

I remember when Diane and I were first married, I would come home from work and she would ask me how my day went? I would always give her the short version like, “good, how was yours?” I didn’t elaborate and was pretty slow to tell her any more, especially when she pushed for details. But then, let one of my buddies call me on the phone and I would tell them all about my day. One day Diane confronted me about this, I was totally blind to my behavior until she told me.

So I began to learn how to talk to her from that day on. When I got home from work we would make a pot

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of coffee and I would make a concerted effort to really let her into the details of my life. And she would give me the details of her day. From there we learned to talk, not only sharing facts of the day, but details of the heart. We both learned to listen as much as talk, being considerate of what the other was saying. No subject was off limits and we discussed everything that God was doing in us and through us. Now we are addicted to the conversation and the caffeine, it's wonderful! We both work from our home serving the house churches that we pastor. We are together almost all of the time and we never have a cross word, unless it is a word about the cross! God is good!

Hey guys, think back to before you married your spouse. Remember the countless hours spent on the phone whispering sweet nothings to one another, you couldn't wait to see her, and there was no gift too expensive, she was always on your mind. So what goes wrong? Where does that romance go? Why do we quit trying to win her heart? Were you lying before you were married or did you get lazy?

If your sex life is lacking it is because your communication is lacking! If your idea of foreplay is asking her if she's awake, you are missing it. I have always been amused by Judah who approached a woman who he thought was a prostitute but was actually his daughter-in-law, and he said, "Let me come in unto thee..." Your wife is not a prostitute and sex is more than just a body function. Sex is the exclamation point at the end of good communication between a husband and his wife!!!

Learn to communicate from the heart, all of life should be foreplay. Sex can happen at any time because we are continually sharing our hearts. We need to show those unmarried folks and fornicators that mar-

riage is a blast! They are the ones missing out, not us. Quit misrepresenting marriage to your children by making it seem dull. Romance your spouse and make your marriage the center of your home. Remember, marriage is the chosen illustration of Christ and His Church.

That Your Prayers Are Not Hindered

I believe that prayer is the pinnacle of our worship or intimacy with God. I also believe that good marriages have powerful prayer unity. Poor communication between spouses will lead to sexual frustration and resentment, which will render our prayer lives ineffective.

If you will recall in chapter three we discussed our “Spiritual Lives”. In that chapter I suggested that men were to be the pastors of their homes. Here again we will re-visit that thought.

I believe that it is vital for the husband to initiate in spiritual matters, especially prayer. When you approach your wife and take her by the hand to initiate prayer something powerful happens in you and in her. You will enter your place of authority and the anointing that comes with it will enter you. On the other hand, your wife will be filled with the confidence and security that comes when she knows that you are seeking God’s will for your home.

To have the “unhindered prayers” that I Peter 3:7 describes means that you have to keep all hindrance to prayer out of your home. This is especially true in the area of forgiveness. You must resolve every conflict with good communication. And if you have an offence with one another you must talk it through. Have you ever noticed that when you are mad at someone you

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really don't want to talk to them? But once the difference is settled communication takes off again. **If your communication lines are disrupted between you and your spouse you must get this right or your prayers will go unanswered.**

I will close this chapter with one final story from my early days of marriage. Diane and I got into a disagreement that escalated to a full blown argument. It was late so she got her pillow and a blanket and went to the couch to go to sleep. I asked her what she was doing and said that she refused to sleep in the same bed with me. All I could think of was the Scripture in Ephesians 4:26, "*Be angry, and do not sin: do not let the sun go down on your wrath,*"

I knew that it was alright to get angry but we could not sin while we were angry. And furthermore, we could not let the sun go down on our wrath. So I got my pillow and squeezed in next to her on the couch. Now I am six foot four and in those days I weighed about two hundred and thirty pounds, lying next to me on a couch was not a very appealing situation. What are you doing, she protested? And I quoted the verse from Ephesians 4:26, from there we had a Scriptural mandate to make up. I don't think it is possible to kiss and make up, I think you have to make up then kiss. We both slept in our bed that night, and we have never slept apart due to anger!

There is no other person on earth that I would rather spend time with and talk to than my wife. It only gets better as we get older. She is my best friend and we are friends with benefits the way that God intended!

6

BE FRUITFUL AND MULTIPLY

Parenting

I have another point that I want to make from Genesis 1:26-28, *“Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”*

God Blessed Them

God made man in His image and then He blessed them for the specific task of reproduction. God wanted man to be successful in making more people that would bear His image on the earth. By this man would fill the earth with God’s Glory!

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We discussed the fall of man earlier and the fact that God's image was tarnished because of sin. It now takes the redemptive work of Christ to restore that image in man. *What I want us to see is that God isn't just trying to fill the earth with people, He wants people who bear His image.*

The Example of Noah

After God destroyed all of the disobedient people in the earth with a great flood, He commanded this same thing to Noah. In Genesis 9:1, *"So God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth."*

Once all of the ungodly people were destroyed, God charged Noah to fill the earth with sons and daughters who would bear God's image in the earth.

The Example of Abraham

He also charged Abraham with the same duty as He established His covenant with him in Genesis 17:1-8, *"When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless. And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly." Then Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying: "As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you. Also I give to you and your descendants*

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after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God."

Here we see that God wanted a covenant people that would fill the earth. People who walked blamelessly with God, in other words, people who reflect God's image in this earth. God told Abraham that He would make him exceedingly fruitful and that He would multiply him exceedingly.

This exchange between God and Abraham is also repeated in the New Testament in Hebrews 6:13-18, *"For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying, 'Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you.'" And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is for them an end of all dispute. Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek."*

I point this out to show that God called blessing and multiplication two *"immutable things."* In other words, these are non-negotiable, unchangeable principles. This passage from Hebrews goes on to take the Old Covenant promise to Abraham and compare it to Christ. By doing so God brings the blessing of being fruitful and multiply into the New Covenant.

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Be Fruitful and Multiply

There is a difference between being fruitful and multiplying. The fruit of a marriage is for the husband and his wife to have a baby. To multiply a marriage means that the children move out and start a new home. The idea is an eventual exponential growth that would fill the earth with God's glory. But it seems that every time explosive growth takes place we bear less and less of His glory.

This holds true in our generation. Marriage has been on the decline for decades now while divorces are rampant, homes are falling apart and children are more prone to be fornicators than married. It's one thing to get our marriages repaired but it's quite another to get our parenting fixed. Anyone can make a baby then comes the tough part, raising a child that will bear God's image. *The duty of New Testament parents is to fill the earth with sons and daughters that bear Christ's image in the earth. If your kids are going to reflect God's glory they will have to see you doing it first.*

Back to Divine Order

Now let's bring all of these components of marriage that we discovered in Genesis together. We have a male and a female in covenant with one another and given the commandment to reproduce. Keeping all of this in Divine Order will prove to be the challenge.

In our chapter on Divine Order we carefully studied Ephesians chapter five gleaning the ideas of mutual submission to one another, the husband as head of the home, and wives submitted to their husbands. I purposely stopped short of the role of children in the home and their place in Divine Order.

I want to remind you of something that I said in passing in chapter five, “we are to make marriage the center piece of our homes.” **I believe one of the biggest problems that we are facing today is that of child centered homes and this is out of Divine Order!**

Obey Your Parents In The Lord

So now let's look at the child's place in the home. In Ephesians 6:1-4 we find that they too have a duty, “*Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. “Honor your father and mother,” which is the first commandment with promise: “that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.” And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.*”

Children are to obey their parents “...in the Lord.” God placed the Husband as the head of the wife. The wives are submitted to their husbands and children are to be in subjection to their parents. Parents then have the great task of training their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

As I previously mentioned, one of the greatest problems in homes today is that kids are running the show.

Narcissism: The Result of Disorderly Homes

The Apostle Paul gave a frightening warning of how people would look in the end times. We find this prophecy in II Timothy 3:1-5, “*But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a*

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form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!"

Notice that the characteristics start with men being "lovers of themselves" and ends with "lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God." I believe that Paul could foresee an entire generation that was totally given to Narcissism. People so in love with self that Paul would call it "perilous times." Paul even warns us to turn away from such people, in other words, don't let that lifestyle influence yours. I believe that we are living in those perilous times that Paul warned us about. I also believe that child centered homes are training children to be Narcissists. This has gone on for so long now that we have Narcissistic parents raising Narcissistic children.

If we are going to raise godly children, I believe we should humble ourselves and our children to learn some lessons from poorer nations. We must avoid the pitfall of child centered homes by strictly adhering to the principles of Divine Order. Just because we can afford to give our children everything that they want doesn't mean that we should. Do you really think a one year old will remember a \$500 dollar first birthday party? Or do you think that excessively celebrating anything is contributing positively to your child's development?

I have been in countries all over the world and have made an interesting observation. Children from extremely impoverished nations are consistently more joyful than children from affluent societies. Our children are taught from childhood that the world revolves around them. We give them everything that they want, we coddle them every time they whimper, and we entertain them every time they announce their boredom. Children from poor countries are shown love but they

are not coddled. They have a true gratitude for anything that they receive. And they don't act like anyone owes them anything.

Jesus Weeps

In one of His most powerful sermons Jesus rebuked the religious leaders of Jerusalem repeatedly calling them hypocrites. After finishing His sermon He sat on a hill overlooking the City and began to weep, Matthew 23:37-39, *"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate; for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!' "*

Religious hypocrisy puts you in danger of losing your children. Christ wants to gather them in but religion always resists Jesus! Truly rebellious religious homes are being left desolate. Could this be what the prophet Malachi was warning us of?

Malachi 4:4-6, *"Remember the Law of Moses, My servant, Which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, With the statutes and judgments. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he will turn The hearts of the fathers to the children, And the hearts of the children to their fathers, Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse."*

This promise was actually fulfilled in John the Baptist. Luke 1:17 tells us, *"He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and the disobedient to the wis-*

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dom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

Without a doubt, the message of John the Baptist was "repent." This means to change the way you think. If we are going to see our homes saved it is imperative that we change our thinking about parenting to turn our hearts to our children and to turn their hearts to us.

Provoked Children

When parents get their marriages in Divine Order it creates the kind of environment that is conducive to bringing up godly children. As a parent you are to bring up your children in a healthy balance of nurture and admonition. You must also take great care that you are not provoking your children. When you get out of balance with nurture or admonition you are actually in process of provoking them.

In Colossians 3:18-21 we find a condensed version of all that we have been studying, "*Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them. Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.*"

In Ephesians and Colossians we find that parents are warned not to provoke their children. Ephesians warns that a child could be provoked to wrath while Colossians warns that provocation may cause a child to be discouraged. It seems that children respond to provocation from parents in different ways with the two extremes being wrath and discouragement.

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If you are going to avoid provoking your children then it is vital that you understand the absolute needs of your child. Children enter this world totally dependent. As parents you must give them everything that they need, you will also have to differentiate between need and want.

Most parents do well with providing the basic physical needs like food, clothing, and shelter. Yet many parents neglect the important issues of development such as spirituality, identity, and boundaries. And many others even struggle with showing them nurture and love. Still others have a hard time with admonition which includes correction and discipline.

As I said before, I believe that fathers (parents) should pastor their homes. You should not outsource the spiritual development of your children. When it comes to the development of your child's spirituality, identity, and boundaries, it's vital that you be "hands on" in the process.

The Apostle Paul taught how church leaders should behave in I Timothy 3:4-5, "*... one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?);...*"

And again in I Timothy 3:12, "*Let deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.*"

Your home is the first expression of the church and you lead your home!!! It is reasonable that every Christian should be able to keep their children in subjection to the authority of their home. You cannot make your child be a Christian but you can keep your child in sub-

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jection to your authority. You children must be born again to become Christian and this will be out of your control. They must come face to face with the Living God and the atoning work of the cross in order for your God to become their God. Let me share a word of encouragement to you about seeing your children converted to Christ.

The Prodigal Son

It is heart wrenching to watch children of godly parents forsake their upbringing but we see it all too often. We watch parents being held hostage to their children's bad behavior, and even worse they begin to bankroll their rebellion. It's sad enough that the child is going astray so please dear parent don't let them bring you with them. Let's learn the lesson from the Prodigal Son.

Luke 15:11-32, *"Then He said: "A certain man had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.' So he divided to them his livelihood. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living. But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want. Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything. "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants."' "And he arose and came to his father. But*

when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.' "But the father said to his servants, 'Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' And they began to be merry. "Now his older son was in the field. And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fatted calf.' "But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him. So he answered and said to his father, 'Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends. But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.' "And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.'"

Release Him

The term "prodigal" means wasteful or reckless living. There seems to be no logic here, the Prodigal Son just wanted to do what he wanted to do. You will notice that daddy let him go! Whether you want to or not you can't stop someone of age from exercising their will. What you can do is stop them from exercising their will in your home. The Prodigal had to leave dad-

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dy's house to be prodigal, and daddy didn't chase after him, he let him go.

Resources

The irresponsible son left with all that was rightfully his and for a time he felt secure with his inheritance. But when the resources ran out reality set in. This is the part that I wish every parent today could see. **YOU ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE TO FUND YOUR WAYWARD CHILD'S BAD BEHAVIOR!!!** Let them run out of resources and let them suffer the consequences. You have to trust the Lord at this point, are you their savior or will you let God be their Savior? Did you notice that the father of the prodigal did not intervene? I'm sure he missed his son and prayed often for him. Surely his eyes would look down the road longing to see his son return but he did not go after him.

You might say, "But what if something bad happens to him or what if he is killed? That could happen with them living in your home and you need to face reality that if your child has chosen to forsake God that child is already dead in sin. You must give room for God to be God!

Reality and Repentance

The realities of consequences are a wonderful teacher. It is then that God can bring a person to repentance. When the party is over and the money is gone it is only natural to remember how well you had it at home. The prodigal son found himself feeding pigs and wanting a share of the slop. Then he remembered how good it was back at daddy's table, in his humiliation he began to rehearse his please take me back speech.

Reunited

When daddy saw his son returning home he ran to him and embraced him. The son began his much rehearsed speech but it was unnecessary, dad was already pouring his love and mercy on him. Please see this folks, that father could have aborted a true reconciliation by interfering with the work that broke his son. His restraint was not lack of love, no, it was proof of love. It was not lack of faith, it was powerful faith that God would bring his son home!

Religious Resentment

When the prodigal's brother learned of his brother's return, he totally resented his brother and his father. He was angry that his father would celebrate the return of his irresponsible sibling while his consistent faithfulness seemed to go unrecognized. Maybe this gives us some insight as to why the prodigal left in the first place. If you think about it, who was and is really lost in this family? Daddy received one son back from the dead but now he discovered that his other son was really worse off than the prodigal. He lived in his father's house and never really understood who or what he was, and all that he had. I once read about a man who starved to death, and when they discovered his dead body in his home they also found that he had \$80,000 in cash. He died with the resources for life within reach. So many live that way today, how sad is that?

Rejoice

I encourage you dear parent, if you are raising children, trust that they are learning what you tell them. If your child has gone astray, only pursue them

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in prayer. Their return to the Lord and your home will be a great cause for rejoicing.

And let me add one more thing. As touching as this story is, it's only touching once. If we have this powerful reunion in June and in August he pawns your television to buy some meth and goes off again. The story loses something. Don't settle for getting your child back home make sure that they become Christians!

Jesus Blessed the Children

Now I would like for us to consider Jesus' example of being "hands on" with your children. In Matthew 19:1-12, Jesus discusses the problem of divorce and reinforces the thought that marriage should be permanent between one man and one woman. Right after defending the permanence of marriage to the religious leaders who were looking to justify divorce, some parents brought their children to Jesus.

Let's read the story in Matthew 19:13-15, *"Then little children were brought to Him that He might put His hands on them and pray, but the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven." And He laid His hands on them and departed from there."*

Jesus rebuked His disciples for hindering the children from coming to Him. He didn't want children to know Him as some far away religious symbol. He wanted them to know Him in an intimate "hands on" way. So He laid His hands on them, He touched them and prayed WITH them.

If parents spent a fraction of the time in powerful prayer that leads to a touch from Jesus we would see a true revival in America. If you think that I am going overboard here let me put it in perspective. How much time do you spend watching television? How about playing sports? I know that some kids play sixty to eighty baseball games a year, not including practices. What if you learned to pray with the effective fervent prayers of a righteous man and taught your children to pray this way also? After all, what are you wanting your child to be Christian or religious?

You can spend all of the time in the world with your child and they can still go to hell. I see parents today who spend endless amounts of time and money with their children and the kids are no closer to God than any other heathen. You can bring them to church, religious programs, academics, sports, social endeavors, hobbies... and still lose your child. And what if they gain the whole world and lose their soul?

Today's children are in desperate need for the relational touch from Jesus. And Jesus intends to touch your children through you. If your relationship with Jesus cannot translate into a relationship with your spouse and children, then you just have cold religion.

Blessing Your Children

The last section of this chapter is actually an excerpt from my book "The Doctrines of Christ." I thought that it would be helpful in giving you inspiration to bless your children through the ministry of laying on of hands.

Laying Hands on Your Children

One of the rules of Bibles study is called the “law of first mention”. Many times the first use of a word or subject in the Scriptures will give us valuable insight to its meaning. The first mention of laying hands on someone in Scripture is particularly revealing, especially in light of “hands on” or relational discipleship (especially as you disciple your children).

I know that this reading is rather lengthy but there is so much to extract from this chapter that I included it all. We find our first mention in Genesis 48:1-22, *“Now it came to pass after these things that Joseph was told, “Indeed your father is sick”; and he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. And Jacob was told, “Look, your son Joseph is coming to you”; and Israel strengthened himself and sat up on the bed. Then Jacob said to Joseph: “God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me, and said to me, ‘Behold, I will make you fruitful and multiply you, and I will make of you a multitude of people, and give this land to your descendants after you as an everlasting possession.’ And now your two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine. Your offspring whom you beget after them shall be yours; they will be called by the name of their brothers in their inheritance. But as for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died beside me in the land of Canaan on the way, when there was but a little distance to go to Ephrath; and I buried her there on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem).” Then Israel saw Joseph’s sons, and said, “Who are these?” Joseph said to his father, “They are my sons, whom God has given me in this place.” And he said, “Please bring them to me, and I will bless them.” Now the eyes of Israel were dim with age, so that he could not see. Then Joseph*

brought them near him, and he kissed them and embraced them. And Israel said to Joseph, "I had not thought to see your face; but in fact, God has also shown me your offspring!" So Joseph brought them from beside his knees, and he bowed down with his face to the earth. And Joseph took them both, Ephraim with his right hand toward Israel's left hand, and Manasseh with his left hand toward Israel's right hand, and brought them near him. Then Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh's head, guiding his hands knowingly, for Manasseh was the firstborn. And he blessed Joseph, and said: "God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, The God who has fed me all my life long to this day, The Angel who has redeemed me from all evil, Bless the lads; Let my name be named upon them, And the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; And let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth." Now when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on the head of Ephraim, it displeased him; so he took hold of his father's hand to remove it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. And Joseph said to his father, Not so, my father, for this one is the firstborn; put your right hand on his head." But his father refused and said, "I know, my son, I know. He also shall become a people, and he also shall be great; but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations." So he blessed them that day, saying, "By you Israel will bless, saying, 'May God make you as Ephraim and as Manasseh!'" And thus he set Ephraim before Manasseh. Then Israel said to Joseph, "Behold, I am dying, but God will be with you and bring you back to the land of your fathers. Moreover I have given to you one portion above your brothers, which I took from the hand of the Amorite with my sword and my bow."

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Threefold Blessing

In verses 1-4, we find our first point concerning the laying on of hands. Jacob recalled to his sons how God first appeared to him, and how He blessed him. In other words, he gave them his testimony. God's blessing on Jacob were actually threefold, *"God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me, and said to me, 'Behold, I will make you fruitful and multiply you, and I will make of you a multitude of people, and give this land to your descendants after you as an everlasting possession."*

Jacob's three blessing were actually one. His house would bear fruit and multiply into more houses, until he became a multitude, and then God would give him a land to accommodate their increase. This promise began with Abraham, then was passed to Isaac, and finally to Jacob, now he was about to pass the promise to his sons.

The thing to keep in mind as Jacob lays his hands on Ephraim and Manasseh, is that there were only about 70 people in the family at this point, and the only land that they actually owned was Sarah's burial plot at the cave of Machpelah.

When Jacob laid his hands on Joseph's sons that day and prophesied, he spoke purely on the authority of the vision that God gave him, and by faith that God would bring it to pass!

Adoption

In verse 5, Jacob actually adopts Joseph's two sons Ephraim and Manasseh, and included them alongside his natural born sons in the inheritance. This is unusual since the two boys already had Joseph for their

father. I believe this represents the need that we all have for spiritual adoption.

Jesus taught us that He would not leave us as orphans (John 14:18). This was a promise that He would come to us in the Holy Spirit. Romans 8: 16-17 further illustrates this, *“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.”*

Joseph’s sons were about to have a spiritual encounter that day that would forever mark their lives. I believe that spiritual adoption happens through hearing the words of spiritual fathers and the laying on of hands of the fathers.

Spiritual Authority

The next point that I want us to consider is in verse 12, *“So Joseph brought them from beside his knees, and he bowed down with his face to the earth.”*

Can you imagine how this impressed Ephraim and Manasseh that day? Their father was the second most powerful political figure in the world! The only man he ever bowed to was Pharaoh himself. But today with wide eyes they marveled as their father bowed before his father.

The lesson is one of spiritual authority, this is a higher authority than family, politics, finances, or even popularity. In the laying on of hands we need to understand, if we have it, we can give it.

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Joseph was certainly a spiritually gifted man and wonderfully used by God. But the promise of the blessings was in his father, not in him.

Imparting the Prophetic Blessings

In verses 13-18, we see the greatest insights to this lesson, as Jacob lays his hands on Ephraim and Manasseh, and began to prophetically impart spiritual blessings to them. Let's look at the particulars of what he imparted that day.

First, He worshipped God. Our sons must see the fathers as those who initiate spiritual worship. Too often is the case that spiritual business is left up to women these days, this ought not to be so. We need spiritual men who worship God, not just going to religious services, but actually leading in prayers, words, and deeds. Parents have powerful authority and anointing in the realm of their families. They should never forfeit this by delegating spiritual issues in the families to others. There are certainly times when others are involved with your children's development, but you must resist the temptation of outsourcing this for your convenience or laziness.

Second, he gave them his name/identity. Those young men knew who they were spiritually from that day forward. Our generation is in an identity crisis. The breakdown of the family through divorce and fornication, have birthed a confused society, we just don't know who we are. It is one thing to be directionally lost, this is easily corrected. But to not know who you are is much more difficult to fix. We need spiritual adoption and confirmation to secure this lost generation, turning the father's hearts to the sons, and the son's hearts to the fathers.

BE FRUITFUL AND MULTIPLY

Third, he passed on the vision of being fruitful and multiplying into a multitude. These young men had success in their spirits from then on. They knew who they were and what they were going to do. They had every confidence from their fathers earthly and heavenly.

Fourth, he gave specifics of their lot in life. He even foretold that Ephraim (the younger), would do better than Manasseh (the elder), which was unusual.

Fifth, he made them the blessing. "*May God make you as Ephraim and as Manasseh*". Their names would become so famous that people would actually use them as the benchmark of all blessings!

Finally, he gave the land to them, prophesying that God would bring them back to the land of their fathers. This so impressed Joseph that when he was dying he gave a commandment, that when Israel went back to the land, they were to bring his bones with them. The prophetic impartation through the laying on of hands is so powerful that it will affect future generations.

Final Exhortation

In closing this chapter, I want to encourage each of you to speak into your children's lives before someone else does. Children are always trying to "find themselves," and they are easily influenced by those that they look up to. Live the kind of life that your sons and daughters would want to imitate. It may be awkward at first to speak into their lives but not nearly as awkward as watching them become someone that is foreign to your Christian belief. Don't underestimate your own authority and anointing when it comes to speaking into the live of your children.

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7

OUR PHYSICAL BODIES

Our next principle of creation that pertains to marriage is found in Genesis 2:1-7, *“Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made. This is the history of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, before any plant of the field was in the earth and before any herb of the field had grown. For the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the earth, and there was no man to till the ground; but a mist went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground. And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.”*

Rest

When creation was finished, The Creator rested. I really don't understand the idea of God resting but the Bible tells us that He did. Then He blessed the seventh day and sanctified it or set it apart for a day of rest. Later God would establish this as a day of rest for man.

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In Exodus 31:12-18, *“And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak also to the children of Israel, saying: ‘Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you. You shall keep the Sabbath, therefore, for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does any work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people. Work shall be done for six days, but the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever; for in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed” And when He had made an end of speaking with him on Mount Sinai, He gave Moses two tablets of the Testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God.”*

We will come back to how this applies to mankind at the end of this chapter but for now I want us to focus on verse 17, *“It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever; for in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed.*

God rested and was refreshed! As I said, I really don't understand that but if God needed to rest and be refreshed how much more do we? We live in a restless generation, people's minds never stop, yet they rarely come to good conclusions. Like a caged hamster running on a stationary wheel, the gears in most people's minds are constantly turning. No wonder there is a death penalty associated with breaking this principle of creation known as The Sabbath. If we refuse to fully

disengage from all of our labors and receive restorative rest from our Creator we will self destruct! We need rest...

The Physical Body

Genesis 2:7, *“And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.”*

In other words man’s body was formed from a created material, earth. Then God forced His breath into the lifeless form and it became a living being. Therefore, the physical being of man is a fascinating composite of created material from the earth and Divine substance.

The Life of the Flesh is in the Blood

Another passage of Scripture that gives us insight to the human make up found in Leviticus 17:11, *“For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.”*

This passage tells us that the life/soul of man seems to reside in the blood stream. It’s interesting to note that when we breathe in oxygen is carried throughout the body in the blood stream. So the vitality of our flesh is dependent upon getting a good supply of fresh, clean, oxygenated blood throughout the body. This Scripture goes on to say that God gave the blood on the altar to atone for our souls.

From this passage of Scripture we could make a strong teaching for the health of the physical body or we could make a powerful teaching concerning the sal-

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vation and well being of the inner man. I want to do both because they are so finely interwoven.

There are three words that I want us to pay careful attention to here. The first one is “life” meaning to breathe. The second word is “flesh” meaning the fresh, healthy, rosy, physical body of man. Adam’s name actually means “red” as a reference to the color of his fleshly body. Finally, the third word I want you to see is “soul” meaning the exact same as “life” which we have already defined but the translators of the Bible chose to interpret the Hebrew term “nephesh” here as life rather than soul. You will understand this better after I make the next point.

Dividing the Soul from the Spirit

We need to include another passage from the New Testament to fully understand the makeup of the human being.

Hebrews 4:12, *“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”*

Here we see that the Word of God makes a distinction between the soul and the spirit. The Greek word for soul is “psuche” it’s where we get the word “psychology” from. The Greek word for spirit is “pneuma”. Both words mean breath or a blast of air, just like we found in Genesis 2:7. However, they are distinctly different words. I point this out because they are so intricately interwoven that only the Word of God can effectively discern between the two.

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Man is a triune being made of spirit, soul, and body. The spirit of man is the very heart of who you are and that we are at our very center, spiritual. The heart is the seat of value or love and that all of our thought life begins here.

Jesus said in Matthew 15:18-19, *“But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.”*

The soul is made up of the mind, emotions, and will. It is how and where all thoughts are processed based on how much value the heart places on that thought. Then how we feel and what we know factor in on our decision making. In other words, once the thoughts of the heart are processed in the mind and emotions, it then goes to the will for the final decision. Very complicated...

The Body and the Flesh

One last thing that I want to point out before I begin to apply all of this to our marriages is concerning the words “body” and “flesh.” Our physical bodies are amoral. I mean that in and of itself the body is not moral or immoral but rather amoral. When the Bible uses the Greek word “soma” it is usually referring to the amoral physical body. When the Bible uses the Greek term “sarx” it can mean either the physical body or the fallen nature of unredeemed man.

Sanctification of the Whole Person

The Apostle Paul taught us that God was interested in the sanctification of our whole being. Sanctify

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means to be separated for God's use or separated from evil. It is the same Greek word for holy and saints.

I Thessalonians 5:23, *"Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

God wants your whole person set apart for Him not only in your heart and soul, but also in your physical body. Too many today talk about Jesus with their physical mouth while their spiritual hearts are actually far from Him. Jesus addresses this In Matthew 15:7-8, *"Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: 'These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me.' **Our physical life and our spiritual life are supposed to be the same thing!**"* Anything less is hypocrisy!

On the other hand, consider what Jesus told His disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane. Matthew 26:40-41, *"Then He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "What! Could you not watch with Me one hour? Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."*

Jesus expects His disciples to discipline their flesh to do what the spirit was willing to do. It is amazing to me that we expect people to learn mental and physical disciplines to do all sorts of things, yet when it comes to Christianity we think those same principles don't apply.

The Apostle Paul said in I Corinthians 9:23-27, *"Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with you. Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes*

for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified."

Paul believed in using physical disciplines to carry out spiritual commandments. You live in a physical body and like it or not you are conditioning your body to do what you actually believe whether good or evil.

You Are the Temple of God

Jesus Himself coined the idea that our bodies are the temple of God. We find this in John 2:13-22, *"Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers doing business. When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables. And He said to those who sold doves, "Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!" Then His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up." So the Jews answered and said to Him, "What sign do You show to us, since You do these things?" Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." Then the Jews said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" But He was speaking of the temple of His body. Therefore, when He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this to them; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said."*

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How fitting that He would cleanse the religious temple then make the point of the true temple of God being our bodies. Religious activity is not true rest or worship. As a matter of fact, you can become exhausted in the burdens of serving religious programs! We should follow Jesus' example and violently throw out everything in our temples that rob us of the rest that worship is intended to give us.

Jesus said, "*Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up.*" I believe that we could look at that passage two ways. First, the way most view this passage is that Jesus' was eaten up with zeal for His Father's house. However, I think there is another way to look at this. The zeal that we have for religious activity actually consumes Christ. So much so that we end up with religious works in buildings that are void of God's presence.

After teaching this lesson the indignant Jews demanded a sign from heaven that He would do things so contrary to their religious programs. Jesus' answer, "*Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.*" This only made sense to His disciples after He was raised from the dead. Religion is so contrary to Christ that it killed the temple of His body. But on the third day God raised Jesus from the dead! In the Old Testament, Solomon's Temple was the epicenter of all worship. Now in the New Testament, the body of Christ, the church, is where we enter the restorative rest of worship.

God Does Not Live In Man Made Buildings

The first martyr of the church was the deacon Stephen. He was martyred for this saying found in Acts 7:47-51, "*But Solomon built Him a house. However, the Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands, as the prophet says: 'Heaven is My throne, And earth is My*

footstool. What house will you build for Me? says the Lord, Or what is the place of My rest? Has My hand not made all these things?' "You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you."

God doesn't live in a building, He lives in people! This was such a foreign thought to the Jews that they killed Stephen for it. It was also the key evidence in the mock trial to put Jesus to death. Religion needs religious objects. Righteousness is an indwelling relationship with our Creator, and it needs no religious symbols because it has the true substance!

God's Temple Is Holy

The Apostle Paul explains it this way in I Corinthians 3:16-17, *"Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are."*

We are the temple of God individually and corporately. First, the Spirit of God indwells the individual believer. Then, when individual believers are joined together in loving relationships, He indwells them corporately. The later is known as the church, which is the body of Christ. The structure of the New Testament church is relational not bricks and mortar. When this gets confused we begin to serve a program and buildings and rest goes down the drain. But when we serve God in loving relationships with one another we enter the rest that God intended for us to have.

Now we are getting closer to understanding how the study of our physical bodies applies to marriage. Remember our lessons from Ephesians chapter five. Our marriages are to be an example of Christ and the

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church. The first expression of the church is found in the marriage when *"the two become one flesh."* Our homes are to be filled with the presence and the power of God. We are restored to God as we take time by faith to reflect on our works and judge whether they are good or not. Then we worship and give thanks to our Creator for all of His blessings in our lives, in doing so we will be restored as individuals and as a married couple. Remember, it takes faith to designate the time to stop and disengage from all activity. If we don't, we are running headlong into destruction.

We are sternly warned here that if we defile the temple we stand in danger of being destroyed by God. I believe that many individuals, marriages, and entire churches are being destroyed today for violating the Sabbath. We are busy with activities and ignoring the principles of rest.

The Appetites of the Flesh

The Apostle Paul gave another example of our bodies being the temple of God in I Corinthians 6:12-20, *"All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods, but God will destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For "the two," He says, "shall become one flesh." But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him. Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual im-*

morality sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's."

The Belly

Once again Paul uses the illustration of our bodies being the temple of God, but this time he is more focused on our appetites. In verses 12-13, he specifically addresses food.

We live in a generation that worships the belly! Let me explain, Paul also said in the book of Philippians 3:17-21, *"Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things. For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself."*

Paul tells us here of those who are *"enemies of the cross of Christ."* What makes them enemies? Their god is their belly! As I said, I believe that we are in a generation that worships the belly. How so, you may ask? There is a segment of society today that is so given to appetite that obesity is becoming a major problem all over the world today. Then there is another segment of society that want the perfect mid-section and they will stop at almost nothing to get that six pack abs look. So whether they have a fat belly or a flat belly the belly is

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being adored. They are either filling it full of as much food as it wants or spending hours on end sculpting it to perfection. Either way the belly is god!

The body is a temple but who is being worshipped in the temple is the key. Are you worshipping the temple or God? Paul said that God will destroy both the stomach and the foods.

Sexual Immorality

The next thing that Paul addresses in I Corinthians 6:14-20, was the issue of fornication or sexual sin. He says that sexual sin was a sin against your own body. If we are Christians our bodies are part of the body of Christ. Sexual sin not only harms us as individual, but as a spouse and a member of the church.

Paul goes on to say that even in fornication “*the two become one.*” This is spiritual adultery. This is what Jesus was saying in Matthew 5:27-30, “*You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.*”

Adultery in the heart is a terrible thing. Today the problem of “*looking to lust*” is magnified by the way people dress or undress in public. The television continually flashes flesh at us not to mention what you can find on the internet with pornography. These things

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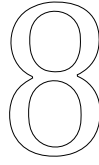
are killing your relationship to God and your relationship to your spouses. But for all of the availability of pornographic images the real problem is in the heart. You may not be able to help what you see but you can certainly help what you think about.

Jesus said in Matthew 15:19-20, *“For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man.”*

Thought starts in the heart but is processed in the mind. If your heart is pure it will not desire forbidden sexual experiences. And when the mind is renewed in Christ it will not process the thoughts the way the world does but the way Christ does!

Christ paid a high price for your body! He does not intend for you to defile what He purchased with His own blood. Your physical body must be disciplined to live out what your heart believes. The body that you pledged to Christ and to your spouse is not yours to do with as you please. It is His and His Lordship must govern the actions of the whole person spirit, soul, and body.

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WORK

Work Has Been Redeemed

I believe it is vital for our lives to be defined by God. Too many people today are defined by their work. They become so engrossed in what they do that they lose who they are and what they are working for. Work is what we do, Christianity is who we are.

On the other hand, there are those who are lazy, they just don't want to work. I remember before I became a Christian I always had a job but I didn't like to work. After I was born again I was filled with life and energy, I couldn't wait to go to work! Here I am thirty years later and I still feel the same way. If you hate to work you are going to hate most of your life. In the New Testament work has been redeemed!

Ephesians 2:8-10, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."

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We are not saved by what we do, we are saved by faith. But once we are saved God has a good work prepared for you to do. We should walk in good works.

Genesis 2:1-3, *“Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.”*

God worked for six days and rested on the seventh day. He then blessed and sanctified the seventh day for a day of rest and refreshing, a day to reflect on what He had done and evaluate His work. If God rested, reflected, and found refreshment on the seventh day so should we.

Identity then Function

My first pastor, the late Jimmie Kepper used to say, *“You have to be before you do”*, that’s still good counsel today because it is in keeping with creation’s order. Once our identity is established the next step is to find our purpose.

God gives us our identity and then He gives us a function. Most of the subject of this book up to this point has been dealing with our spiritual identity. Now let’s look at our work.

Genesis 2:8-15, *“The LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed. And out of the ground the LORD God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.”*

Now a river went out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it parted and became four riverheads. The name of the first is Pishon; it is the one which skirts the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. And the gold of that land is good. Bdellium and the onyx stone are there. The name of the second river is Gihon; it is the one which goes around the whole land of Cush. The name of the third river is Hiddekel; it is the one which goes toward the east of Assyria. The fourth river is the Euphrates. Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it."

Produce

Let me point out a few observations about this passage. First, God planted a garden that produced food. Productivity is important to our lives. Remember that God commanded us to have dominion and be fruitful and multiply. If we fail to have dominion we are overcome by something and we will end up with fruitless lives. Our work is to provide the things that are necessary to our lives such as food, clothing, and shelter.

Two Trees

The next observation is that God identified two kinds of trees in the garden, the tree of life, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It seems that there are two types of work, one is spiritual and fulfilling and the other is soulish and it works death in us. I know that we have already covered this but let me inject a reminder here about the tree of knowledge.

Tree of Knowledge

Genesis 2:16-17, *"And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden you may freely*

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eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

The tree of knowledge was inside of the borders of the man but placed off limits to him under a penalty of death. We know that he eventually ate the forbidden fruit and brought death into the world.

Now mankind seems to be addicted to eating from this tree. We live in the information age, a generation that believes that knowledge is power. But the Bible teaches us that there is forbidden knowledge. It seems that the forbidden tree is all about worldly soulish learning. Yet this is the crop that we seem to be tending today and we are working death into ourselves. Our heads are swelling with knowledge but we are failing at the things in life that really matter. Like a relationship with God and our families. The death penalty for eating of this fruit is obviously still in effect.

Tree of Life

The tree of life, on the other hand, seems to be more about the spiritual life. When tempted by the devil during an extended fast, Jesus said in Matthew 4:3-4, *"Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, 'If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.' But He answered and said, 'It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"*

According to Jesus' logic there are two types of food. One is necessary to feed the physical body and the other to feed the inner man. Notice that the Word of God is nourishment to the inner man.

He said it another way in John 6:63, *"It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life."*

The word of God is life giving because it feeds the spiritual man. If we neglect this we will die.

Jesus gives us another lesson about spiritual nourishment in John 4:31-38, *"In the meantime His disciples urged Him, saying, 'Rabbi, eat.' But He said to them, 'I have food to eat of which you do not know.' Therefore the disciples said to one another, 'Has anyone brought Him anything to eat?' Jesus said to them, 'My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work. Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest! And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. For in this the saying is true: 'One sows and another reaps.' I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labors."*

In this passage the lesson was not about just Bible reading but about actively doing the will and work of God by harvesting people into His kingdom. No matter what our occupation may be. if we lose sight of this our work will become mundane. You could even be a pastor or church worker and still be spiritually unfulfilled if you are not laboring in the spiritual harvest. We need to avoid the trap of compartmentalizing our work life, our family life, our church life, our hobby life, etc... Wherever we go and whatever we do we must lift up our eyes to see the harvest of God.

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Boundaries

The next observation that I would point out from man's placement in the garden of God is that it had very specific boundaries.

I believe that God has a very specific work for every one of us. The key to a fulfilling life is to find that work that God has suited you to and for then do it! But when we wander from where God places us to fulfill our purpose we are like the proverbial bird that wanders from its nest, we seem to live out of God's will and God's way. What you end up doing may not necessarily be evil or bad it is not God's perfect will for you.

Another pitfall concerning boundaries occurs when we spread ourselves thin and put a lot of irons in a lot of different fires. When this happens we end up being ineffective at everything.

Boundaries tell us that we have limits. Eden was a large land and it gave the man all the room for adventure that he needed. We have to learn to be content in the place that God has placed us and remember that life with Him is filled with the things that keep us fresh and alive. We have to respect those lines or we will suffer repercussions in our personal lives, our marriages, and most of all our relationship with God.

One last observation concerning the boundaries in Eden was that they were all defined by rivers of water. In the book of Revelation 22:1-2 we find a great picture of the things we are studying, *"And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit*

every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.”

Notice that the river begins at God’s throne (His Lordship). The river is the Holy Spirit and once we are yielded to the Lordship of Christ the Holy Spirit will flow to us with His life, provision, and healing! In other words, as a Christian we must let the Holy Spirit define our borders. Those who are led by the Spirit of God are the sons and daughters of God.

Stewardship

It used to be that people, like Adam, worked to produce the things that they would eat. My grandparents on both sides were like that. They grew their own meat, milk, and produce. There were very few things that they purchased outside of their own farms.

In today’s economy, most of us work to earn money to buy the things that we need. With the high cost of living in America today, money pressures can easily strain our marital relationships. The real issue is not about how much money that we make or not, but what we do with what we have, in a word, stewardship. ***After many years of marriage counseling I have discovered that all too often the cause of most financial strife in a marriage is due to poor stewardship!***

I want to share a lengthy story from Scripture that will serve us well concerning stewardship.

It’s found in Luke 16:1-18, *“He also said to His disciples: “There was a certain rich man who had a steward, and an accusation was brought to him that this man was wasting his goods. So he called him and said to him, ‘What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your stewardship, for you can no longer be steward.”*

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“Then the steward said within himself, ‘What shall I do? For my master is taking the stewardship away from me. I cannot dig; I am ashamed to beg. I have resolved what to do, that when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.’

“So he called every one of his master’s debtors to him, and said to the first, ‘How much do you owe my master?’ And he said, ‘A hundred measures of oil.’ So he said to him, ‘Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.’ Then he said to another, ‘And how much do you owe?’ So he said, ‘A hundred measures of wheat.’ And he said to him, ‘Take your bill, and write eighty.’ So the master commended the unjust steward because he had dealt shrewdly. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light.

“And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home. He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much. 11 Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in what is another man’s, who will give you what is your own?

“No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”

Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, also heard all these things, and they derided Him. And He said to them, “You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.

“The law and the prophets were until John. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it. 17 And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tittle of the law to fail.

“Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced from her husband commits adultery.

Wasting His Goods

The person in this story was called into question because he was wasting his boss's goods. As a Christian we should understand that EVERYTHING that we have belongs to God! And secondly, we will be held accountable to God for what we did with those things that He put in our possession. Are you a wise steward or a wasteful steward?

Shrewd

The steward in this story was very shrewd. Knowing that he was fired and no longer had his boss's favor, he cooked the books to gain favor with his boss's debtors. The boss even thought that this was a shrewd move even though it cost him plenty. This story is not condoning what amounts to theft, but commending the craftiness of a soon to be unemployed man getting out of a financial bind.

Then the boss makes a terrible assessment of Christians, he said that the world is shrewder than we are, mainly because our morals call for higher standards of ethics than the world.

The lesson in the story is that we should use our wealth to make relationships that will last forever, that's truly shrewd!

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Faithful in the Least

One of the greatest tests of faithfulness is dealing with the small things in life, especially in finances. We all want to dream of the things we would do if we had lots of money but the sad truth is, that you would do exactly the same things you are doing now. Most lottery winners' end up the same way that they started...broke! We must learn to be faithful with the small stuff and then we can handle the big stuff.

I can't begin to number the people that have come to us with money problems wanting us to help them fix their issues. They walk in with a super-sized drink from a fast food place and begin to tell me of their money woes. Naturally, I have to inquire how often the whole family eats at a fast food chain then I help them do the math. Twenty dollars a trip times thirty trips per month is six hundred dollars. That is when they usually get mad at me for trying to deprive them of this luxury. The same holds true with smokers, drinkers, lottery players, and avid hobbyists, etc.; if only they were faithful with twenty dollar bills they could afford cars and houses.

Being faithful means that you handle the small things well over and over again. Eventually, those small acts of faithfulness add up to larger and larger acts of faithfulness. One word of caution, never lose sight of the fact that it all belongs to God.

If there are true riches then there must be false riches. Hey, if you think that true wealth is eating fast food everyday then go for it but don't complain that you don't have a house, or a car, or gas, etc... rejoice that you have a Big Gulp and hard arteries! However, I don't believe that "true riches" have anything to do with money but has everything to do with your rela-

tionship with God and with your spouse! And if you are squandering your money instead of providing the things that are needful for your family then you are putting undue financial stress on your marriage.

One more thought about faithfulness, the lesson of being faithful in finances comes not from handling your own finances but the finances of someone else. In other words, if you are faithful with your boss's business then you would be faithful with your own. If you handle your employer's money well then you would handle your own well. Don't get jealous of what others have but learn how to be faithful with what God has given you including your job! Did you notice that inside the boundaries that God placed Adam in there was gold? I believe that when we are faithful where God places us that we will live in the true riches of God.

Either God is going to be your God or money will be your god. You must decide then never let the lines between the two get blurred. You cannot serve God and mammon but you can earn a living while being totally faithful to God!

Covetous

Jesus ended the parable of the steward and was immediately ridiculed by the religious leaders. He identified their problem as covetousness, which the Bible calls idolatry. We must take care that we don't let our wants destroy our marriages. So many cases of marital strife begin here because one or both parties are trying to get what they selfishly want. The Bible warns us to run from idolatry so we should also run away from the things that we covet or we will destroy our homes.

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He ended the confrontation with the Pharisees by pointing out one part of the law concerning marriage and divorce. I don't believe that was coincidental. I believe that most problems in marriage are connected to covetousness and poor stewardship. I further believe that these culprits lead to divorce. Remember, you have to divorce God before you divorce your spouse.

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We've come to the last point that God revealed to me concerning marriage in the Creation Story. If I might be cliché, last but not least our final point is the covenant of marriage.

Genesis 2:24, *"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."*

This "one liner" is packed with information concerning the binding covenant that we enter when we say, "I do." There are three parts to this one verse of Scripture and we will examine them one by one.

Leave Parents

The first step into the covenant of marriage is to understand that a new household is being established and with that comes a new authority structure. As we learned in our study about "Dominion" that flow of authority in the home is God first, then the man, next the woman, and children are placed under them. To under-

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stand our point let's work from the children's place in the home at the bottom of the ladder in authority, back up to the top.

As children, we are raised under our parent's authority and are told by God, "*Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise: that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.*" (Ephesians 6:1-3).

We spend the formative years of our lives under the tutelage of our parents, and we are commanded to obey their authority while we are under their roof. Once we are grown and meet the spouse that we will share our life with we leave our parent's home and authority structure and start our own. We are always commanded to **honor** our parents but we are not always commanded to **obey** our parents. Believe it or not, this is a major issue and can either be a blessing or a curse in a new marriage.

If handled properly, parents will assist their children in making a smooth transition into their own home and its new authority structure. This may include help and guidance when making some of the major decisions that newlyweds face. It may also include some financial assistance. But all of this should be done sparingly and without stipulations that make the new marriage beholding to the parents.

If handled improperly, parents will interfere with the new couple's decision making and put pressure on them to do it their way. Or the newlyweds will put pressure on the parents to make decisions for them or to pay for decisions that they make.

ALL OF THESE MISTAKES SHOULD BE AVOIDED AT ALL COSTS!!! In-law interference can be a major problem to a marriage. This is why the Bible points out the obvious fact that we are to leave our parent's house and make our own. It seems elementary but to quote Jim Clark, "there are some that just cannot cut the umbilical cord."

Another issue is communication. As I said, it's okay to seek advice and counsel from our parents and even to talk about our new marriages. But there are things that should be kept private in our marriages. They are nobodies' business but your own. Don't run to mamma and daddy to talk about every little issue going on in your house. That invites them in and they may try to inject themselves into your relationship in a way that is totally unnatural. There must be confidentiality in the home or this will cause you to distrust one another and close off the lines to your hearts.

Remember, God said that it is not good for the man to be alone and then He created the woman. The issues of your hearts and especially your sexual intimacy are private and should be kept that way. To violate this private part of your marriage could cause irreparable damage to future communication and intimacy. If you are having difficulties you should seek counsel from qualified impartial counselors that will not try to control your home.

Both the parents and the newlyweds should understand that God is the authority over that new home. If the parents try to do God's job the young marriage is headed for failure. No matter how great those parents are they are not God, so parents must resist the urge to control that new household. And the newlyweds must resist the urge to rely on their parents in the place of God or God will never be your God!

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Joined to His Wife

After the command to leave father and mother, the man was commanded to be “joined to his wife.” “Joining” ultimately makes the two become one but in order to understand it we must deal with them as two subjects.

First let’s define the word “join.” The Hebrew word for “join” is “dabaq,” and it means cling or adhere to, to abide, make fast together or fastened, follow close, or stick together.

We can gain even more insight by reading how Christ Himself discussed this passage in Mark 10:1-9 (the passage that inspired this book), *“Then He arose from there and came to the region of Judea by the other side of the Jordan. And multitudes gathered to Him again, and as He was accustomed, He taught them again. The Pharisees came and asked Him, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?” testing Him. And He answered and said to them, “What did Moses command you?” They said, “Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce, and to dismiss her.” And Jesus answered and said to them, “Because of the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept. But from the beginning of the creation, God ‘made them male and female.’ ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’; so then they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.”*

From the beginning of Creation, God made male and female to be joined together. And furthermore, once they were joined it is His intention that no man would ever separate them!!! Christ taught that joining was to be a permanent bond.

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Read what the Apostle Paul said concerning the idea of being joined to another person in I Corinthians 6:15-20, *“Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For “the two,” He says, “shall become one flesh.” But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him. Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.”*

I know that we looked at this before but it is so vital to our study that we must take a second look. As Paul deals with joining here he shows us that it means to be joined in sexual intimacy. Even in sex outside of marriage the two become one that’s why sex is assigned exclusively to the marriage bed. To violate this causes internal problems because we sin not only against God but against our own bodies. The power of the spiritual glue that holds the two together when we have sexual intimacy is intended to have a lasting effect.

Another thing that we can glean from what Paul shows us in these verses is that having sex doesn’t mean that we are married in the eyes of God. There is something other than the act of sexual intimacy that makes this proper in the sight of God.

The Book of Hebrews 13:4 says, *“Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.”*

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What I want us to see is that Biblically there must be an act of marriage that is more than the two coming together in sexual intimacy or else there would be no such thing as fornication or adultery.

The “Act of Marriage” or Wedding someone is a spiritual bonding in the sight of God. Perhaps this is why Jesus preformed His first miracle at a wedding feast.

John 2:1-11, *“On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Now both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding. And when they ran out of wine, the mother of Jesus said to Him, “They have no wine.” Jesus said to her, “Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come.” His mother said to the servants, “Whatever He says to you, do it.” Now there were set there six waterpots of stone, according to the manner of purification of the Jews, containing twenty or thirty gallons apiece. Jesus said to them, “Fill the waterpots with water.” And they filled them up to the brim. And He said to them, “Draw some out now, and take it to the master of the feast.” And they took it. When the master of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom. And he said to him, “Every man at the beginning sets out the good wine, and when the guests have well drunk, then the inferior. You have kept the good wine until now!” This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him.”*

The “beginning of miracles” was that Jesus turned water into wine. But I believe that the second part of the miracle is that He saved the best wine for last.

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Wine is symbolic of blood. Jesus makes this reference at the Last Supper when He said, *“Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.”* (Luke 22:20).

When the guests at the marriage in Cana tasted the wine they all agreed that it was better than the wine they were drinking before. The first wine was symbolic of the Old Testament and the water that Jesus turned into wine is symbolic of the New Testament. The New Testament blood of Jesus truly is better than the Old Testament blood of bulls and goats.

Under the Old Testament, hard-hearted people were divorcing their spouses. Jesus came with a better covenant a New Testament in His blood. This covenant melts our hard hearts and gives us a new heart and a new spirit with the commandments of God inscribed on our tender newly created hearts. Those who still have hard hearts and divorce their spouses are under the law and have either not understood grace or they have departed from God!

See what the Apostle Paul teaches about this in the Book of Romans 7:1-6, *“Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives? For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man. Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to*

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God. For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death. But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter."

Paul uses the illustration of the law of marriage to show us how to enter blood covenant with the body of Christ. When a man and a woman enter into the covenant of marriage they are bound to one another as long as they both live. If one dies then the other is free to marry someone else.

If your heart is hard you are showing every sign that you are under the Old Testament Law and not in the New Covenant of grace. The only way out of the first covenant is to die. You have to die with Christ in order to be free to enter the New Covenant with His body. The rigid law only works death in us while the flow of grace causes us to live in the newness of the spirit.

Once again we see that marriage is used to illustrate our relationship to Christ. Once we are in Christ, we are free to fulfill what God intended for us at the beginning of creation concerning marriage.

The Two Become One

The final part of the marriage covenant is that the two become one flesh. It's God's intention that the two individual lives would become so intermingled that it is absolutely impossible to separate them. Like scrambling two eggs, once it's done you can't undo it.

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Remember, this happens first in our relationship with Him and then in our relationship with our spouses.

Perhaps in light of this we will better understand Jesus' prayer in John 17:21-23, *"that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me."*

Jesus prayed that we would be made one the same way that He was one with the Father. God was in Jesus and Jesus was in God, this was done through the person of the Holy Spirit.

The same holds true with us, when we enter into blood covenant with Christ at the cross, the Holy Spirit can then live inside of us and we will live in Him.

When a man who is "in Christ" marries a woman who is "in Christ" they can enjoy a blessed spiritual union that is held together by the Prince of Peace in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Who would even want to live with someone that we don't get along with? Nothing grieves my heart more than to talk to married couples that are forfeiting all of the benefits of marriage. They live together but they fight and strive continually not knowing that peace in the home is theirs for the taking. Oh to see marriages restored to continual righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit would surely be a great revival in our generation!!!

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Love not Fear

The Bible says in Romans 8:15-16, *“For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God...”*

I believe this passage of Scripture shows the difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament. Notice that we didn't receive a “spirit of bondage to fear” but a “spirit of adoption”.

The Old Testament was fear based, meaning, if you didn't do as you were told death was required. God, in His love and mercy, allowed for the offender to kill an innocent victim in his or her place to make atonement for the sin. The fear of death was the motivator in the Old Testament.

The New Testament is love based meaning that the death penalty was already paid by Christ and once this is revealed in our hearts we die and are buried with Him, then we are raised to new life with Him in the power of the Holy Spirit. We are so in love with Him that we do what He says. Even though the death penalty is there, love not fear is the motivator in the New Testament. This especially holds true in marriage.

Consider Solomon's words in the Song of Solomon 8:6-7, *“Set me as a seal upon your heart, As a seal upon your arm; For love is as strong as death, Jealousy as cruel as the grave; Its flames are flames of fire, A most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, Nor can the floods drown it. If a man would give for love All the wealth of his house, It would be utterly despised.”*

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The covenant of marriage contains both love and fear. When I met Diane White in 1976, I was not drawn to her because I was afraid, I was drawn to her by love. But, on our wedding day August 7th 1982, I had all sorts of fear in my heart as the weight of the covenant we were about to enter laid hold on me.

I see so many today that stay married out of duty and fear of what would happen if they were to divorce. So they trudge along fussing and fighting and grinding out an existence, what a terrible way to live!

According to the Song of Solomon, love is as strong as death. I would rather live out my marriage in love with my wife than in death with her. Jealousy and death are a cruel way to live. Fan the flames of love and keep those fires burning instead. Let the same love that motivated you to get married motivate your entire marriage relationship.

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10

THE MARRIAGE VOWS

My First Wedding

I remember as a young preacher it came time to perform my first wedding. Even though I was ordained through my local church as a licensed minister and registered with the State of Louisiana, I had not yet attended Bible College. So I obtained a pastor's handbook that contained the old time wedding vows that went something like this:

Groom: I,____, take thee,_____, to my lawful wedded Wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part, according to God's holy ordinance; and thereto I plight thee my troth (Huh, what's a troth?).

Bride: I, _____, take thee, _____, to be my lawful wedded Husband, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love, cherish, and to obey, till death us do part, according to God's holy ordinance; and thereto I give thee my troth (Say what, there's that troth thing again?).

Then, as the groom places the ring on the bride's finger, he says the following:

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With this Ring I thee wed, with my body I thee worship (worship, really?), and with all my worldly goods I thee endow (Whaaat?): In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Well, we had us a wedding ceremony and I didn't even know what most of it meant or how it pertained to marriage, and I still don't. I even continued using these same vows years into my ministry but I was never comfortable with them. But as with most traditions, I just kept using them because that's how everyone does it.

Years ago when the Lord first began to reveal the things contained in this book He also began to prompt me to consider what was being vowed to in the wedding ceremony. So as I considered each component that He was showing me in the creation of marriage I thought, why not vow to live the way He intended?

Review

In each chapter of this book I dealt with one principle of creation pertaining to marriage. Let's look at the main point to each chapter beginning with chapter two:

1. First we discussed that light was the first thing created. Then we learned that the light in creation was the revelation that Christ would be slain for the sins of men. We also learned that to walk in the light meant to walk in a loving relationship with one another before the Lord.
2. Next we learned that we were created to bear God's image in the earth. This chapter was all about how sin marred God's image in us and how we can be re-created in Christ Jesus to bear the image of God once again.

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3. In chapter four we discovered that God commanded us to have dominion over creation but not over one another. We also learned that we were to be submitted first to God and then mutually to one another in Divine Order.
4. Our sexual identity, chapter five examines the fact that we are created male and female. In this chapter we learn of the regression into sexual perversion described in the first chapter of The Book of Romans. We also discussed the role of communication in sexual intimacy.
5. In chapter six we learned that children are the fruit of a marriage and that multiplying meant for our children to start homes of their own. Our duty in parenting is to help our children bear the image of God in the earth.
6. Next we discussed our physical bodies in chapter seven. God gave us a physical body and in the New Testament our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit. We learned that we are to take care of our bodies and keep them holy.
7. Chapter eight was all about our work, earning a living and our stewardship of the things that God gives to us.
8. Finally, in chapter nine we discussed the covenant of marriage, pointing out the need to leave our parent's home (also to minimize their involvement in a new marriage) and how the two actually become one.

After God revealed the contents of this book to me I began to put these creation principles right in the foundation of the wedding ceremony. I have been using them for over ten years now with wonderful results.

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Pre-Marital Counsel

First, I have the couple agree to meet with my wife and me once a week to discuss the creation of marriage. It is my firm conviction that we should put more emphasis on the marriage than on the wedding day. That's why we want the couple to make a significant investment into pre-marital counseling.

This also serves well in post-marital counseling. When couples come to us now we inventory how they are doing in keeping each vow. It doesn't take long to troubleshoot any marriage when you go through each of these vows and ask how they are doing at each one. Once we find the problem we can send them home with a clear objective to work toward.

The Wedding Vows

On the wedding day we actually have the couple vow to keep each principle of creation in their marriage. I have been using these vows for over ten years now with wonderful results. I find that when these vows are incorporated into a traditional wedding, they make an anointed and beautiful ceremony that is both glorifying to God, and edifying to all who witness the marriage.

Declaration of Intent

Minister: Have each one repeat the following acknowledgments separately:

I, (Have them say their own name here), acknowledge today, that just as God brought Eve to Adam, I believe that God has brought you (Have them say the other party's name), to me.

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I come willingly today, in agreement with God's original intent for mankind, to make vows with you, before God and these witnesses, committing us to the holy institution of marriage.

First Vow:

Minister: Creation began with Light, the first light of creation is the revelation that Jesus, The Lamb of God, was slain before the world began. Will you walk in this light, in a relationship first with God, and then with one another?

Couple: I Will (Let each one answer separately).

Second Vow:

Minister: God took great pains to restore His image in all of us. He allowed His Son to die in our place on the cross to cleanse us from sin and restore His image in us. Will you be careful to display His image to one another in this marriage?

Couple: I Will.

Minister: Will you pray for and with one another daily?

Couple: I Will.

Third Vow:

Minister: Will you submit first to God as the authority over this home, and then

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mutually to one another, to see God's Divine Order established in this marriage?

Couple: I Will.

Minister: To the man: God has placed the husband as the head of the home. Will you love your wife as Christ loved the church by dying to your own self to live for Christ and your wife?

Man: I Will.

Minister: To the woman: God placed you under your husband's authority. Will you be submissive to this as God's Divine Order?

Woman: I Will.

Minister: Will you pledge your created dominion nature only to use it to accomplish God's will?

Couple: I Will.

Minister: Will you refrain from attempting to dominate, control, or manipulate each other?

Couple: I Will.

Fourth Vow:

Minister: God made you male and female, divinely designed for both procreation and pleasure. Will you pledge your sexuality exclusively to this marriage bed?

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Couple: I Will.

Minister: To the man: God said of Adam, "It's not good for man to be alone." Then He created a woman to cure this issue. Will you promise to communicate from your heart with your wife?

Man: I Will.

Minister: To the woman: God made Eve as a helper for the man. Will you promise to help your husband's communication from your heart?

Woman: I Will.

Minister: Adam knew his wife and she conceived. Will you take care to communicate from the heart allowing this heart exchange to lead to sexual intimacy?

Couple: I Will.

Minister: Will you agree not to withhold or abuse sexual intimacy?

Couple: I Will.

Fifth Vow:

Minister: Will you cooperate with God's plan to fill the earth by bearing children through your sexual intimacy?

Couple: I Will.

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Minister: Will you pledge to raise your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, so that someday they will start their own homes?

Couple: I Will.

Minister: Will you do all that you can to see that your children are born again to reflect God's glory in the earth?

Couple: I Will.

Sixth Vow:

Minister: God gave you a physical body. In the New Testament He declares that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. Will you keep your temple clean by living healthy, avoiding all addictive behavior and vice?

Couple: I Will.

Seventh Vow:

Minister: Will you work to earn finances and be a good steward of those finances?

Couple: I Will.

The Covenant Vow:

Minister: The Bible says in Genesis 2:24, "24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."

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Minister: Today will you serve everyone notice, that you are leaving your parents homes and authority to begin your own home with its own authority structure?

Couple: I will.

Minister: Christ Himself said in the Book of Mark 10:7-9, *"⁷ For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, ⁸ and the two shall become one flesh'; so then they are no longer two, but one flesh. ⁹ Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate."*

God intended this marriage to be permanent. Will you vow on your own life today that nothing but death will separate you?

Couple: I will.

Minister: Prayer to seal the marriage.

Blood Covenant

The final vow is a pledge that "nothing but death will separate" the marriage. This part is what makes marriage a blood covenant. Both parties vow with their lives that only death will separate them. It is a fitting place in the ceremony to perhaps celebrate the Lord's Supper to reinforce the power of the blood covenant that everyone has just witnessed.

When God and Abram entered into a blood covenant, God instructed Abram to kill a heifer, a goat, a ram, a turtle dove, and a pigeon. Next He told him to cut them in half, except for the dove and pigeon (he just pulled

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their heads off). Then He put the pieces back together in rows. Tradition tells us that then both parties would walk amongst the dead carcasses in a figure eight (the number of new beginnings) and say something like this, "The Lord do so to me and more if I keep not the words of this covenant." With that vow each party's life was drastically altered because they had sworn with a blood oath to keep the covenant.

We see a form of this in the Book of Ruth when Ruth vowed to go with her mother-in-law Naomi.

Ruth 1:16-17, *"But Ruth said: "Entreat me not to leave you, Or to turn back from following after you; For wherever you go, I will go; And wherever you lodge, I will lodge; Your people shall be my people, And your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, And there will I be buried. The LORD do so to me, and more also, If anything but death parts you and me."*

In the Old Testament when men entered into covenant with God, it was done through a blood covenant. Man would "cut covenant" by shedding blood to seal the agreement.

In the New Testament things changed drastically, God cut covenant with man by shedding the blood of His Son on the cross. We enter the covenant with God by faith, believing that the blood of Christ is the strength of the covenant.

So it is with New Testament marriage, as Christians we are already in a "blood covenant" with God through the cross of Christ. Now we enter into blood covenant with our spouses by vowing on our own life that only death will separate us, this too is a blood covenant. That's why I believe that using the symbols of the

Lord's Supper is a powerful way to seal the covenant of marriage.

Love Is As Strong As Death

Please allow me to recycle a passage of Scripture that we briefly discussed in Chapter Nine.

Song of Solomon 8:6-7, "Set me as a seal upon your heart, As a seal upon your arm; For love is as strong as death, Jealousy as cruel as the grave; Its flames are flames of fire, A most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, Nor can the floods drown it. If a man would give for love All the wealth of his house, It would be utterly despised."

The strength of the Old Covenant was the fear of death, the strength of the New Covenant is the power of love. The marriage vows certainly contain a blood covenant but remember that love is as strong as death. I would much rather be kept by the power of love than the dread of death. It is noble to say that, "I would die for you." It is far nobler to declare that, "I will live for you."

There is a passage that I believe will strengthen this idea in I John 4:18-19, *"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us."*

Love has no fear! Perfect love will violently throw fear out of our lives and all of the torment associated with it. The source of this perfect love is God Himself. We must constantly remain connected to the source and flow of this love in order to have any love to give. The human capacity to love is soon exhausted but God's love is constant. When we abide in the love of

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God our capacity to give love is as inexhaustible as the source Himself. If for some reason fear would rear its ugly head to arouse tormenting doubts about your spouse, perfect love will soon evict this intruder with great force!!! When perfect love is practiced in a marriage you will soon become fearless lovers of God and one another!!!

Behold, I Make All Things New

We have studied the principles of creation throughout this book most of which are found in the Book of Genesis. I would like to end this book with a few thoughts from the end of the Bible.

Revelation 21:1-7, *“Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.” Then He who sat on the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.” And He said to me, “Write, for these words are true and faithful.” And He said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.”*

Double Peace

Someday God will create a new heaven and a new earth. The "New Jerusalem" will look like a bride dressed for her husband. I think that the comparison of the New Jerusalem to a marriage in the new creation is significant. First because that Jerusalem meant "new peace" and New Jerusalem means "New New Peace" or "Double Peace." I believe as we incorporate the principles of creation into our marriages we will experience the double portion of peace promised for those who inhabit eternity. We may not have world peace but we can have peace in ourselves and in our marriages and experience a little bit of heaven on earth.

The Tabernacle

Once again as we consider the future, God tells us that His tabernacle will dwell among men. I know that we look forward to a new creation of heaven and earth and I'm sure that the presence of His Tabernacle among us will be the most awesome thing that we experience in the new creation. But for now, we are the temple of God and the Spirit of God dwells in us.

Ephesians 1:13-14, "In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory."

The Holy Spirit is actually God's deposit on our eternal inheritance until we are fully redeemed at the resurrection of the dead. So for now we need to enjoy the presence of God now in our earthly tabernacles of our bodies and our marriages until Jesus comes back to

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take us to our eternal homes in glory. So live today like you have already begun to enjoy eternity, let the presence of God dwell richly in you and your home.

Consolation

One of the most anticipated promises of eternity is the day when God Himself will console us from the pains we endured while in this life. God will wipe away our tears, whether those tears were caused by death, sickness, or injury, all pain will be done away with.

If your marriage has been a source of sorrow, God can heal it. Jesus came to heal the broken hearted so let Him heal you and your marriage now in this present life.

The promise goes on to say that God will make all things new. I believe that God wants to begin that renewal process in you now. So let His mercies be made new in you every morning. Allow Him to wash you in His Word and re-generate you in His Holy Spirit, so that you can walk in the newness of life and marriage today.

We have studied the beginning and now we have just taken a little glimpse into the new-beginning. I pray that you will drink of the living waters of life freely in your personal life and in your marriage.

God Bless You...

Other Books by Teryl Hebert

The Doctrines of Christ

The Biblical Church



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