

Responsible Marriage

I once heard of a woman who woke her husband in the middle of the night, and said, "Henry, wake up. I just had this terrible nightmare. I dreamed I was at an auction for husbands. One husband brought \$10,000 and others sold for sums in the millions."

That's all it took to get him awake. He asked, "Well, Honey, what were husbands like me bringing?"

She said, "That's what was so disgusting. They were taking ones like you, tying them in a bundle, and selling them for a dollar a bunch."

R. Larry Moyer

Years ago when my 2-year-old car needed a new battery, my son said, "Dad, we need to buy a new car. This one is getting old." When the tape deck needed work, he said, "Dad, we'd better buy a new car. This one is eating us out of house and home." I insisted there was no reason to spend thousands of dollars on a new car just because the old one needed minor repairs.

Marriages are a bit like that. Sometimes a little maintenance can get the marriage operating smoothly again. Occasionally a serious breakdown means a complete overhaul is necessary, but most problems are solvable. Even if there has been an affair, the marriage can usually be restored at the price of repentance and forgiveness.

R. L. Russell

Ephesians 5: 21 – 33

1) The premises of marriage

- Marriage is God's design not man's
 - Genesis 1: 21 – 25 So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. ²² Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.
- Marriage is a covenant
 - Malachi 2: 14 You ask, "Why?" It is because the LORD is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth, because you have broken faith with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant.
- If marriage is God's design and it is a covenant then we ought to take care to protect and nurture our marriages.

2) Entering into a Responsible Marriage

- Find the spouse of God's choice
 - Pray and ask God for the right person for you.
- Love is not enough – have the same purpose
 - If one wants to go into business and serve the Lord in the community where he/she lives and the other believes they are called to serve as missionaries somewhere else it won't work.

- Do not marry an unbeliever
 - 2 Cor. 6:14 – 16 Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? ¹⁵ What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people."
- Do not marry someone of the same sex as you
 - Homosexual marriages are forbidden in scripture
 - Romans 1:26 - 27 Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.

3) The Responsible Marriage

- Mutual responsibility in marriage
 - When we submit to God, we become more willing to obey his command to submit to others, that is, to subordinate our rights to theirs (Commentary on Ephesians – Life Application Bible)
 - Verse 21 of Ephesians 5 is the start of a new paragraph thus beginning Paul's instructions to husbands and wives.
 - The equality of the husband and the wife is primarily highlighted prior to the respective responsibilities of either.
 - If submission is submitting our rights to someone else then mutual submission is the mutual submission of our rights in our marriage to take up our responsibility for the wellbeing of our spouse.
 - When we stop seeking for our own needs to be met and seek to meet the needs of our partner then both of our needs will be met.
 - The man and wife are mutually responsible to leave their father and mother and be united to each other.
- The Responsible Husband
 - The husband is the head of the wife (v.23)
 - 1Cor. 11:3 Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.
 - Too many husbands quote this to assert their authority over their wives. However being the head of the wife does not mean the assertion of authority but rather the taking up of responsibility to lead his wife and family.
 - Speaking about leadership Jesus teaches us that leadership in the Kingdom of God is about serving and not about lording it over someone else. (Matthew 20: 25)
 - As Christ is the head of the church so the man ought to be the head over his wife.
 - He is to lead her with love and consideration.
 - 1Peter 3:7 The same goes for you husbands: Be good husbands to your wives. Honour them, delight in them. As women they lack some of your advantages. But in the new life of God's grace, you're equals. Treat your wives, then, as equals so your prayers don't run aground. (The Message)

- The husband's primary responsibility to his wife is to love her as Christ loved the church
 - Sacrificially – He gave Himself up for her (v. 25)
 - To make her holy – Christ makes the church holy but husbands cannot and should not try and make their wives holy. They are to lead their wives into relationship with God through creating a Christ centered environment in the home.
 - Prayer, devotions, Bible reading, church
 - To work to allowing your wife to become all that God created her to be – Christ will present himself with a radiant church
- Wives normally submit easily to husbands who love them.
- Feminism arises from men who:
 - Are authoritarian
 - Neglect their responsibility as the head of the wife
- Understand the needs of your wives
- Dr Willard Harley highlights some of the main need of a wife from her husband
 - Affection
 - Conversation with her husband
 - Honesty and openness from her husband
 - Financial security
 - Commitment to the family
- The Responsible Wife
 - Submit to your husbands as to the Lord
 - ^{1Peter 3: 1 - 6} The same goes for you wives: Be good wives to your husbands, responsive to their needs. There are husbands who, indifferent as they are to any words about God, will be captivated by your life of holy beauty. What matters is not your outer appearance—the styling of your hair, the jewelry you wear, the cut of your clothes—but your inner disposition. Cultivate inner beauty, the gentle, gracious kind that God delights in. The holy women of old were beautiful before God that way, and were good, loyal wives to their husbands. Sarah, for instance, taking care of Abraham, would address him as “my dear husband.” You’ll be true daughters of Sarah if you do the same, unanxious and unintimidated.
 - Submission doesn't mean that the wife becomes a doormat for the husband to walk all over. It is a willingness to allow the husband to carry out his God given responsibility in being the head of the family and assisting him in that
 - ^{Genesis 2:18} The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."
 - Cultivate and inner beauty rather than concentrate on outer appearances. However inner beauty will reflect in the way we groom ourselves
 - Be good, loyal wives.
 - Understand and be responsive to the needs of your husband
 - A study has been made by Dr Willard Harley of the top 5 needs of men:
 - Sexual fulfillment
 - Recreational companionship
 - An attractive spouse
 - Domestic support
 - Admiration