

# FAMILY MATTERS

**A**cross our nation families are under attack by the devil. Families are falling apart. Husbands are leaving their wives and wives are leaving their husbands. Children are left hurting and without a sense of security and love. At least half of all marriages in many western countries end in divorce! Sadly, many of those that don't experience divorce do not thrive and experience rewarding relationships.

God has something better for us. I believe that the Bible gives us principles that can make a big difference in our marriages and families.

## KEY POINTS

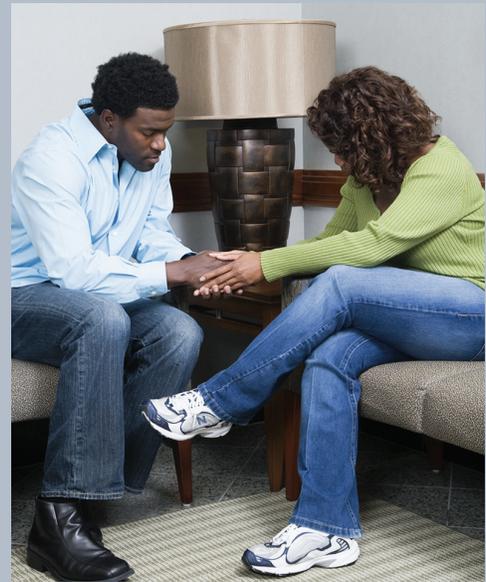
First, marriage was part of God's plan. It was part of paradise. "And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. . . . Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." (Genesis 2:18, 21-24) In fact, the first miracle that Jesus performed was at a wedding! God intended marriage to be a blessing to humanity.

The Bible is also clear in defining marriage. Marriage is to be between one man and one woman. Additionally, it is interesting that half of the Ten Commandments deal with family relationships. For example, the second commandment regarding graven images states: "Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me." (Ex. 20:4-6) And the fourth commandment: "But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter." (Exodus 20:10) The Sabbath was for the whole family to rest.

"Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee." (Exodus 20:12) Obviously that commandment is family related. How about "Thou shalt not commit adultery." (Exodus 20:14) Ties directly to family and marriage, doesn't it? Check out the Tenth Commandment as well. (Ex. 20:17) Family is important to God. By obeying His commandments we protect the family circle!

Marriage is sacred by God's standards. A man and a woman becoming "one flesh" brings in the idea of something not found anywhere else. We don't become "one flesh" with our parents or our siblings or friends. No—we become "one flesh" only with our husband or wife. This oneness isn't just sexual. This intimacy is intended to be a fortress. And when that fortress is breached, the marriage will be compromised and the entire family will be devastated.

Paul wrote about the depth a husband's love should reach when he said: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it." (Eph. 5:2) Christ's death is the ultimate example of unselfish love.



A Christian home is a wonderful testimony to the power of the gospel.



Remember, husbands and wives are “one flesh” and no one hates his own flesh. That means there’s no place in a marriage for any kind of physical violence or abuse. Only a sick person mutilates their own flesh. Instead, he is to love her as Christ loves the church. Paul also tells women they should love their husbands: “That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands,” he writes. (Titus 2:4)

And so we see that God wants both husbands and wives to love each other from the heart and protect their marriage at all costs. We must be careful to protect our affections and conversations with others outside our marriage. Spouses must commit to each other emotionally and physically, meeting each other’s needs. They must avoid any sexual relationship outside marriage. (1 Corinthians 7:2) Flee temptation if it comes at you. If you indulge it, you will have a foretaste of hell that will sear your soul forever.



God’s principles of love can make your home a little heaven on earth.

There are four rules for a happy marriage:

1. We must forgive one-another. (Ephesians 4:32) No marriage can thrive if the bitterness of an unforgiving spirit is permitted to linger.
2. Accept the fact that you are married to someone physically, spiritually, and emotionally damaged by sin. (Romans 3:23) Someone once said, “Before you get married, view your prospective spouse with a magnifying glass. After you get married, look at your spouse with one eye closed.
3. Have empathy. When something bad happens, ask yourself, “What does this look like from his/her perspective?” Then ask God to take charge of the situation. (Eph. 2:14-16)
4. Be willing to die to self for the good of the other. Jesus put our welfare above His own.

Someone once asked a preacher, “What is the best thing a father can do for his children?” The preacher answered, “Love their mother.” And, of course, the same is true for a mother as well. “Love their father.” And these principles of love can make your home a little heaven on earth.

The relationship of children to their parents is also addressed in Scripture. The Bible tells us that children are to honor their parents. Paul also writes: “Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” (Ephesians 6:1-4) Great counsel from the Lord!

### **TAKE-HOME MESSAGE**

Yes, families are important. A Christian home is a wonderful testimony to the power of the gospel. Of course, in this world we can do everything right and things might still go wrong. The important thing is to insure that we are faithful in doing all we can to build up and protect our family. Follow the principles for success outlined in God’s commandments and leave the results with God.

### **BETWEEN YOU AND GOD**

With so much trouble and conflict in the world today, our homes should be a haven of peace and love. It is in our homes that we should find a place of security where we are united in the bond of love.

Will you commit to build a home where Jesus is the center of everything? Will you be a part of a home which chooses daily to follow the Lord? Will you as husband and wife join hands in a pledge to make your home a haven of love? Remember, that marriage (and a family) still takes three - husband, wife and the Lord of love, Jesus Christ!