

Foundational Blocks for the Building & Maintaining of a Godly Marriage.

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If you are married, without question, the most important element in your entire life is your marriage. You may have success at work and rise above all others in your field but if you fail in your marriage then you've failed at everything. A godly man is first and foremost a godly man at home. Everything else — everything! — flows from this. If a man's marriage suffers, then his spiritual life suffers with it, including his prayer life. So if your marriage is undoubtedly the most important part of your life, then we need to ensure that we hear what God says about building and keeping a godly marriage.

Here are **six foundational blocks** for the building and maintaining of a Godly, healthy, joyful marriage.

1. SALVATION.

The meaning of marriage is the gospel. It is impossible for a person to fully realize and enjoy the blessings of marriage while living in an unregenerate state. Though unbelievers often enter into the covenant of marriage and enjoy the benefits of it, all nonChristians forfeit the real meaning of marriage because it is only understood in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, the first major essential for a Godly marriage is that the husband and the wife be believers who submit themselves to God as Almighty Sovereign and to His Word as sufficiently authoritative. The Word of God perfectly contains the standards and guidelines for living in harmony and enjoying a God-centered marriage. Thus, a person must repent of his sin, turn to Christ in saving faith, surrender to Christ's Lordship and determine to follow Christ, serve Him with an ever-growing passion to honor and please Christ Jesus!

2. OBEDIENCE.

The divine rulebook for marriage is the Bible. The Bible perfectly and sufficiently contains everything that is needed to have a godly, harmonious and joyful marriage. God leaves nothing necessary out of Scripture. Even the various roles that husbands and wives have and how they must fulfill those roles are all contained in the Scriptures. All men are created in the image of God but God gives different roles to the men and the women. God decrees that the husband is the head — leader, authority — of his household. He is the leader. He must lead and serve and function like the leader that God has called him to be. If he doesn't, he fails at being a Godly husband and he must repent and seek God's commands in the Word. The wives, on the other hand, are determined by God to be the completer of the husband; she is his helpmate, his supporter, his companion, his helper. She is to submit to him and his headship — leadership. She is to honor, respect and come alongside of him as he leads. As both the husband and the wife read their duties that God has revealed in His Word, they must humbly, willingly, heartfully, and worshipfully obey what God commands of them in their respective roles.

2. COMMUNICATION.

All marital conflict can at some point be traced back to a breach in the communication. God is a communicating God. In the very beginning of time, God said... (Gen 1.3). Furthermore, God spoke long ago... (Heb 1.1). God communicates through His creation (Ps 19) and most gloriously and sufficiently through His Son, the Lord Jesus (John 1.18). Humans, created in the image and likeness of God, also are communicative beings. When two sinners — a husband and a wife — come together, when conflict arises, it can be traced back to a miscommunication. Words are powerful. Indeed, life and death is in the power of the tongue (Prov 18.21). Words not only must be spoken rightly (Eph 4.25) but also must be spoken at the right time (Prov 25.11). Indeed, words must have the ultimate goal of giving grace to those who hear (Eph 4.29) as if it was always seasoned with salt (Col 4.6). Husbands and wives must communicate frequently, regularly and even intentionally! Schedule it if needed. Husbands must learn their wives and this is impossible in large part without verbally talking with his bride (1 Pet 3.7). Words can

often cut deep (Prov 18.19) and if someone has something against you, you should approach them and make it right before worshiping God (Matt 5.23). That is to say, pretending that a past conflict didn't happen and refusing to deal with it never works. It never accomplishes anything good whatsoever. Husbands and wives must be humble, Christlike, and diligent to ask for forgiveness when they have sinned. They should not apologize but rather they must acknowledge their fault, call it sin, ask for forgiveness, and wait for the other person to grant forgiveness.

3. FORGIVENESS.

It is no wonder that forgiveness must be properly understood in order to be practiced rightly in a marriage relationship. No marriage can flourish and be healthy if forgiveness is not often asked and granted. Since all people are sinners, and marriages comprise two sinners, forgiveness must be understood since it will have a very prominent place in the growth and maturation of the relationship. Forgiveness never means to forget a sin as if it never happened. Forgiveness never means to pretend as though it didn't happen. Forgiveness does not mean taking a person out on a vacation or a nice meal to win their heart again and be on 'good terms' again. Forgiveness, rather, is a promise of pardon. Every Christian who has been forgiven by God in Christ of an infinite debt that could never be repaid must forgive others in the same way that he has been forgiven (Eph 4.32). To refuse to forgive anyone who asks for it is to prove that he does not know God and will be cast into hell (Matt 18.34-35). If you forgive others, your heavenly Father will forgive you (Matt 6.14). But if you choose to not forgive others — by holding a grudge, by bringing old matters up again, by harboring bitterness, resentment, anger, revenge — then your heavenly Father will not forgive your transgressions (Matt 6.15). When God forgives, He does not forget for God is omniscient and He knows all things (Ps 139.12). But when God forgives, He actively makes a decision to not hold the offense against a person; that is, He chooses to pardon and never to bring it up again (Heb 8.12). No matter how great the offense, no matter how often a spouse may commit a sin, whenever they ask for forgiveness, you as a Christian must forgive them graciously, willingly, lavishly, and eagerly (Matt 18.21-22). If your spouse sins and comes to you regardless

of the offense asking for forgiveness, you must grant forgiveness lavishly and promise to pardon the offense and never bring it up to them, to others, nor to dwell on it yourself. This is biblical forgiveness. Every Christian must forgive like this since Christ forgave you in this way (Ps 85:2-3; 86:5; Col 2:13).

4. STEWARDSHIP.

Everything belongs to God — everything! There is nothing that you have, nothing that you own, nothing that you are, and nothing that God gives to you that belongs to you. Ultimately, God is the owner of everything and you are His sovereignly-appointed steward over His items. You are a steward of God's time, of God's resources, of God's people (e.g., children). A godly marriage must understand that everything belongs to God (Ps 50.11). The way that a godly marriage flourishes is by being good stewards with all that God gives them. This includes being good stewards of time, of possessions, of money, and of the children. Time is a gift from God and all Christians must be careful how they walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of the time because the days are evil (Eph 5.15-16). Every married couple must guard their time. They must prioritize time together and never allow other hobbies, entertainments, or friends (even ministry engagements!) to consume all of their time so they have no time and energy to devote to the strengthening of the marriage relationship. Second, a godly marriage must understand that everything belongs to God. Every possession they have — a house, a car, tables, clothes, and all items — ultimately belongs to God. A husband and wife must remember that God has loaned His possessions to them so that they would use them well, glorify Him in the process, and worship Him as they grow in their marriage relationship. This mindset will prevent a husband and a wife from fostering idolatrous desires toward a house, a car, an upcoming vacation, a boat, or any other home-items/possessions. Next, the husband and wife must glorify God as to how they handle their money. Of course, it's not theirs; it's God's. All money belongs to God. Husbands and wives must talk frequently, openly, honestly, and intentionally about all matters of spending so that there is no unnecessary spending and that there would be no hoarding of material possessions that could easily win and woo a person's heart. The husband, as the head of the home, must ensure that the finances are being

well-managed and that God's money is being used in God's way in God's home to promote God's glory for each person's joy in God! Even the children belong to God! God creates every child in the womb of the mother and thus God owns every child. This prevents a home from easily becoming a 'child-centered' home. A child-centered home is when the husband and wife love the children more than each other. A child-centered home is when the husband and wife has left father and mother and have joined themselves to their children and are more emotionally and relationally connected with the children than they are with each other. This must never happen! Parenting relationships are temporary. The marriage relationship is permanent. Children will grow old, move out, get married, and start a family of their own. Not so with a spouse! You and your wife remain together for life! It's a permanent marriage. Serve the children, love them, enjoy them, train them and remember that they are on loan, given by God, to you, for you to instruct them in God's ways, to prepare them for adulthood, to evangelize them and win them to the Lord, and for you to model for them (by your words and by your actions) that your spouse is in fact your number one priority by far in this world! Husbands and wives must be good stewards of all that God gives in this life so that the marriage will be healthy, God-honoring, Christ-centered, and Spirit-filled.

5. SEX.

Eat friends; drink and imbibe deeply, O lovers (Song 5.1)! The Word of God does not shy away from the delightful, intimate, and pleasurable relations between a husband and a wife in the covenant-bond of marriage. Of course, all sexual relations outside of marriage are sinful. God's wedding gift of sexual relations (intimacy and other kinds of sexual touches that stimulate arousal) must be reserved only for the proper time and it must never be awakened too early (Song 8.4). Sex must be regularly enjoyed (Prov 5.19). A husband and wife must ensure that all sexual relations never become selfish but they must always demonstrate selfless, others-centered, passions so that the husband strives to please his wife in all things and that the wife strives to please her husband in all things (1 Cor 7.2-5). Indeed, the husband makes it his primary ambition to please and bring satisfaction to his wife (this may or may not include an orgasm)(1 Cor 7.33) and the wife makes it her primary ambition to

please and bring satisfaction to her husband (1 Cor 7.34). And when this occurs as God intended it, both the husband and the wife are satisfied; but not by selfish fulfillment but by seeking to fulfill and please the other person! This is why masturbation and pornography are utterly sinful in all of their forms and must never have any part whatsoever in the Godly marriage. The ways of a man are before the eyes of the Lord and He sees all their ways (Prov 5.21). The one who embraces the bosom of a foreign woman is not only utterly foolish (Pro 7.22) but he will be held in the cords of his own sin (Prov 522) and he ultimately destroys himself who does this (Prov 6.32). God prescribes that the Godly marriage should engage in and delight each other in sexual intimacy frequently. The question should not be when 'to' make love; the real question, biblically, is when to 'not' be intimate with one another (1 Cor 7.5). The only time to take a break from sexual intimacy is for a brief season of prayer; but even this is to be brief so that Satan does not bring temptation — but this brief break from sexual intimacy is not commanded (1 Cor 7.5-6). Husbands and wives must communicate about sexual relations. They must talk about what they like, do not like, enjoy, and what makes them uncomfortable. The husband and wife must strive to please the other person and be utterly selfless in all things — even in the bedroom. Indeed, the marriage bed is to be undefiled for God will judge all fornicators and adulterers (Heb 13.4). The lovers in Song of Solomon enjoy each other, each other's bodies, and the lovemaking that God not only created, but permits, encourages, and longs to see his children satisfied only within the covenant bond of marriage between a husband and wife. Ultimately, sexual intimacy between a husband and a wife points to the coming intimacy that that the Bride of Christ — the Church — will soon enjoy with her blessed Bridegroom, the Lord Jesus, when He returns to gather her unto Himself. Let all husbands and wives drink deeply and satisfy each other regularly in the intoxicating love of marriage and all the while let the godly couple remember that the physical intimacy serves as a pointer to the coming union that the Church will enjoy with the Lord Jesus Christ in His blessed chamber for endless eternities to come with blissful delights.

6. FAMILY WORSHIP.

Whether a husband and wife eats, or drinks, or whatever they do, they must do all to the glory of God (1 Cor 10.31). Even all of the husband and wife commands that Paul gives in Colossians 3 (Col 3:18-19) are framed by two overarching statements of doing everything to God's glory and in His name (Col 3:17, 23). The husband must wash his wife in the Word of God just as Christ sanctifies His church by washing her with the Word (Eph 5.25-27). Every godly husband must read the Bible with his wife regularly (Eph 5.26). He must pray with her and for her frequently (Eph 6.18). A household without prayer is like a home without a roof, left unprotected to all the storms of heaven. Husbands must take the lead and preside over the family religion in the home. Every husband is in fact his wife's pastor. He is her primary spiritual guide. He is to teach and instruct her in the Word of God (1 Cor 14.35). He is to wash her in the Word (Eph 5.26) and must say with Joshua, 'As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD' (Josh 24.15). This includes family worship. Family worship is quite simple, it is the regular practice of worshiping God in our homes by every person in the household. Family worship is important and biblically mandated because God deserves to be worshiped, in our homes, by our families, on a daily basis. This can include a number of elements but at least three items should be daily practiced in the home by the father's guidance and direction: singing, reading, and prayer. First, God commands all Christians to sing to God, sing praises to Him, and to speak of all His wonders (Ps 105.2). Indeed, God commands: 'Sing to the Lord, all the earth' (1 Chron 16.23). This serves as a powerful means of teaching the family theology through song by singing the good, theologically accurate, historical hymns of the faith. The father should deliberately, carefully and prayerfully choose songs to teach his family (including small children!) so that theology is taught and marked upon the hearts and minds of each member of the family. Indeed, this is one great way to prepare a family for heaven since heaven is a singing-place with loud shouts unto the Lamb (Rev 5.12). Second, the father should preside and lead the Bible reading in the home. God commands fathers to teach the children the ways and Word of the Lord (Ps 78.5) so that the children will know God and then teach God's ways to their children (Ps 78.6-7). Fathers must teach God's truths diligently to his sons (Deut 6.7). God prescribes that husbands and fathers should bring up the children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (Eph 6.4). The pastor must not serve this primary role. The youth leader, the nursery worker, the teen's discipler, nor

should the educational instructor be the primary spiritual guide of the children. This place is reserved for the father (and, by extension, the mother) of the children. Family worship, each day in the home, provides regular, daily opportunities to read the Word, allow the Spirit to work through the Word in the saving of the children's souls, and to instruct each family member in the character of God, the works of God, the person and work of Christ, and man's need to repent of sin and turn to Christ in saving faith. Third and finally, every Godly household should pray together regularly since God judges the families that do not call upon His name (Jer 10.25). Fathers should teach the children how to pray: thanksgivings, intercessions, adoration, supplication, confessions, and praying for the local church. Indeed, the fact that God says that the curse of the Lord is on the house of the wicked but He promises to bless the dwelling of the righteous (Prov 3.33) should be reason enough for every husband and wife to engage in regular, diligent, daily family worship in the home so that God would be honored and that His Word would be authoritative in the home, and that God would mold them into the image of Christ as they grow in conformity to Him!