

“A Graceful Body” Workbook

A Study of Marriage Based on Ephesians 5:22-33

David Kuykendall

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Preface

This work is based on our earlier book titled *A Graceful Body*—an exposition of Ephesians 5:22-33 where Paul presents the marital relationship as a well coordinated body.

As our supply of *A Graceful Body* was being exhausted, we began receiving requests to make the book available in a workbook format. The result is this work—“*A Graceful Body*” *Workbook*.

For the most part we have followed both the outline and text of *A Graceful Body*. There are, though, some changes.

Major changes are: chapter seven and one section of chapter three have been completely rewritten and four sections have been deleted from chapter five. Minor changes are the deletion and rearrangement of sentences and paragraphs. We have given chapters 2 and 13 different titles.

The workbook feature following each chapter was designed with two thoughts in mind; helping the reader digest the content of the chapters and encouraging the reader to make personal application of some of the features of the chapters.

I express deepest appreciation to my wife, Janie, who not only assisted me with the manuscript but was a strong encouragement in completing the work. I thank Joe W. Howington for his assistance—especially in formatting the manuscript. I thank Jerry Halbrook for his help with the workbook features and for writing the text for the back cover.

—David Kuykendall

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Introduction

All of us know the eternal story of someone who unknowingly possessed an item of incredible worth, but because he did not realize its value it was for many years absolutely *worthless* to that person. The reason we know the story is because the great price of the item was discovered, and the story was shared.

The fifth chapter of Ephesians contains an extract of enormous, inestimable worth for Christian husbands and wives. Nearly all of God's people possess copies of the extract, but comparatively few have discovered its richness for Christian marriage. Of the thousands and thousands of pages which have been written concerning the marital relationship, Ephesians 5:22-33 is incontestably the most valuable. We desire to assist you in discovering these treasures.

This entire work is foundationed on the Ephesians passage. Obviously we reach into several of the rich New Testament sources, but our scriptural anchor is the one in Ephesians five. We underscore marital concepts in the passage, then explain how this may be incorporated into our own marriages *through our living out of our oneness with Christ*. We also point out the wonderful residual effects for a marriage once these concepts are embraced.

Paul's concept of marriage is that of a *spiritual* head and body. The husband is the head; the wife is the body. As there must be spiritual coordination between Christ and the church (the Head and body), Paul indicates there must be spiritual coordination between the husband (who is the head) and the wife (the body) within the marriage relationship.

The husband and wife functioning with such cooperation (such spiritual coordination!) will develop into a beautiful marital body. Just as it takes correct understanding and approach for skillful athletes to develop physical dexterity, it takes correct understanding and approach for spouses to allow the development of their marriage into the spiritual body they desire. We shall explore this development.

We briefly mention three matters at this juncture.

First, Paul's "stance" in Ephesians five is that husbands are to provide spiritual leadership. It is vital to note the husband will provide spiritual leadership *only* out of his own victory in Jesus Christ. He does not point the way, he *leads* the way.

Second, since our approach is that of spiritual coordination between husband and

wife—the head and the body—we shall here offer a pre-clarification. Paul does not mean by the head-body relationship that the wife's *body* is the husband's body. *The total person*—body, soul, spirit—is the husband's body, in the spiritual sense.

Third, we emphasize that as we speak of the wife's submissive respect toward her husband we are painfully aware of the growing problem of *wife abuse* in our nation—and we are not insensitive to it. Discussion of it does not fit into the narrow scope of this work, but we do have acute awareness of this grave situation.

part one

Gracefulness Is Coordination

“What you need is better coordination between mind and muscle,” I laughingly whispered in a fake southern tone of voice to my friend who had just made a clumsy movement.

He laughed with me. We were having a little childish fun with a statement our junior high school coach repeated over and over to us—that if we were going to be athletes we must develop “coordination between mind and muscle.” His southern accent amused us, but the man was right.

The “gracefulness” we are concerned with in marriage is that *precise* coordination between “mind and muscle”; it is *perfect* coordination between the head and the body.

In the arresting passage of Scripture upon which we are focusing our attention (Eph. 5:22-33), the Apostle Paul very forcefully presents this need for coordination between mind and muscle, between the head and the body.

This coordination is achieved by willing participation on the part of both the husband and the wife.

The husband’s part is *divine love*.

The wife’s part is *submissiveness*.

chapter one

The Loving Husband's Positive Input Encourages Coordination

Coordination is a *must* in building the marital “body beautiful.” Both the husband and the wife must make healthy contributions to coordination.

In our anchor passage (Eph. 5:22-33) Paul suggests that husbands have several responsibilities toward the marriage relationship; however, the only imperative he directs to husbands by way of command is that they “love” their wives. In the first two chapters of this work we shall give attention to Paul’s broad, general imperative to the husbands—then pursue some illustrative New Testament statements which explain what a loving husband’s positive input should be.

There are two Greek words translated in the New Testament by the English word “love.” One refers to a human kind of love—friendly, family kind of love. The other word (*agape*) always depicts *divine love*. With few exceptions so does its verb form. It is the kind of love which God possesses for the human race. The Ephesians 5 passage we are discussing uses the word indicating the God-type of love.

The clear thrust of what Paul says in our Ephesians passage is that husbands are to love their wives. In the passage the apostle makes several applications of the husband’s love: the husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church—enough to die for her; he is to love his wife as his own body—nourishing and cherishing her; he is to love his wife enough to break emotional ties with his parents—leaving his parents and cleaving to his wife. Paul does not, however, discuss the *nature* of his divine love in Ephesians, so we shall look to another of his writings—First Corinthians 13—as a source from which we may draw our insights into divine love.

Let us now turn our attention to the great “love chapter” of the Bible and examine some illustrative material concerning the nature of divine love, then relate how it promotes coordination within the marriage relationship.

In this popular passage Paul expresses the nature of love in both a positive and negative vein. We shall look first to the positive affirmations of divine love which flow from the husband who possesses it.

Love is Patient

The word “patient” literally means a long way away from anger, especially anger directed toward another person.

Unfortunately, there are many people who seem to be angry at life itself. Life has been hard on them and it takes little or nothing for them to explode into anger. Anger creates tensions and strains in the marriage relationship. A wife may be afraid for her husband to come home because she does not know if he will choose that day to “have a fit” about the food, the floors, the finances. Even before he arrives she is able to envision the red-faced anger, the caustic tones of voice which accompany such volatile behavior. What a disruption to marriage.

One of the choice ways to develop coordination between the husband and wife is for the husband to find victory over anger.

Divine love is “patient.” The husband filled with love makes the positive input of patience into his marriage.

Love is patient—it holds off the anger which has made spiritual coordination an impossibility for many marriages.

Love is Kind

We may think of kindness as “gentleness.” The man who loves his wife will be very gentle toward her.

There is further meaning of this word “kindness.” It has to do with service. Ephesians 2:7 teaches us that when we are abiding in the heavenlies, it opens the door for the Lord to reveal His grace to us for all the ages to come. The passage informs us that the Lord does this for us “in kindness.”

Kindness, then, has to do with action. It has to do with service to another person. It has to do with the husband’s service to his wife.

The Lord’s will is for the husband to serve his wife. When the husband is filled with divine love, he will do acts of kindness, of service, toward his wife.

Love is kind. Kindness will unquestionably promote coordination in marriage.

Love Rejoices in the Truth

Paul’s statement “love rejoices in the truth” has this meaning to it: love rejoices *because* of the truth. A husband filled with divine love rejoices because truth prevails.

The loving husband rejoices because of truth as God revealed it by His Spirit and in His word. He will attempt to lead his wife to grow with him in God’s truth. Such rejoicing will affect all that he does.

Obviously there is more involved in rejoicing in truth than “theological truth” or a knowledge of spiritual things. “Love rejoices in the truth” means that it rejoices when *integrity* prevails.

The husband filled with divine love rejoices in that he is truthful toward others—especially the “bride of his youth.” A man with that kind of desire in his heart toward his wife and his family will be a continual refreshment to them—he will lift their spirits. This kind of “total honesty” aids in building a solid marriage—a graceful body.

A wonderful positive input toward coordination.

Love Bears All Things

The word translated “beareth” in First Corinthians 13 means “to cover.” It is used three other times in the New Testament, and in each instance it has the connotation of “enduring.” Once Paul employs the word to indicate that he willingly *endures life* without the financial help he needs because such enduring will aid in the progress of the gospel.

In the other two instances where the word is utilized, it is found in settings which speak of great difficulty. With Paul’s use of it in First Corinthians 13—*love beareth all things*—he is maintaining that divine love will bear up under strenuous circumstances, not breaking down.

All marriages have moments of unfavorable circumstances, times of tension. Under such strenuous circumstances a loving husband will be able to bear it.

Whether the Sea of Life is calmly smooth or raging with vicious waves, the husband’s divine love will be an anchor for his wife.

Love bears all things.

A husband enabled by God’s grace to bear all things will contribute much to the coordination of the marital body.

Love Believes All Things

Some are of the opinion that “love believes all things” means the loving person believes the best of everyone. This is certainly one facet of its meaning.

There is, however, another perspective we will pursue. According to Greek grammar these words may be translated “love believes *with reference to* all things.” People who are filled with divine love will have confidence in God with reference to every situation in which they find themselves.

Think of it in both perspectives. The husband filled with divine love will have a wholesome, positive opinion and attitude concerning his wife, and will believe God with reference to all things concerning his marriage.

He will create a wonderful atmosphere in his home, greatly adding to the coordination of his marriage.

Love Hopes All Things

Following Paul’s assertion that “love trusts the Lord with reference to all things,” the apostle adds that love “hopes all things” in the sense that love is confident this faith will truly bear fruit. Love is assured of the blessing of God upon every situation which we entrust to Him.

While Paul’s discussion of love focuses upon every area of our lives, we are narrowing our scope to that of a loving husband.

The loving husband “hopes all things” concerning his own life and that of his wife. In every concern that he has for her—spiritual, physical, emotional—he will have great hope because he is filled with love.

Individuals outside his family may think the changes he seeks are impossible; but a husband filled with this God-kind of love will not have a fatalistic spirit. He lives day by day with a love that flows and flows from his heart to the heart of his wife. That keeps him before the throne of God, trusting Him with a victorious faith concerning his wife.

Whatever changes need to come within his home, that husband will live with eternal faith that God will bring to pass those changes.

Love hopes all things.

Love Endures All Things

The Greek word for “endure” is translated in other places “patience.” It means to “abide under.” A person who endures is able to *abide under* any circumstances.

At times there are circumstances and situations from which some would walk away. The husband filled with divine love will not walk away from such situations. He will entrust the situation to God and in hope—in utter confidence—believe that God, in His infinite grace, is going to make necessary changes.

This word “endure” is the picture of a man standing beneath a heavy load; he is *under* it. He is filled with the kind of determination that will keep him under that load—and not

drop it. The “determination” does not come from within himself; it comes from the Spirit of God Who has filled him with divine love which always abides.

In Colossians 1:11 the Apostle Paul teaches that by God’s grace we may be so strengthened that we will abide under (endure) “with joyfulness.” There are those who with sheer human strength have “toughed it out.” They may have done so with deep distress and resentment—and without the joy of God.

This is not the way of divine love. Divine love will continue in the circumstances until God—in His perfect timing—is ready to bring the needed changes in the family.

We have viewed seven positive statements from First Corinthians 13 which gives us explanation and illustration of the nature of divine love. Remember, we have looked at these statements in the light of Paul’s command to husbands to love their wives (Eph. 5).

The seven statements enlighten us of ways the husband, filled with this divine love, will make a positive contribution to the necessary *coordination* of his marriage. Some of the explanations of love tell us of action toward the wife, as the loving husband expresses patience and kindness. Other of Paul’s remarks relate how the husband expresses love to his wife as he bears, believes, hopes and endures concerning their marital relationship.

The husband can be *divine love in action*.

He is filled with divine love only as he is filled by the Holy Spirit. In a subsequent chapter we shall discuss in detail how the husband may be filled with the Holy Spirit...

... and thus how he can be filled with divine love.

REVIEW THE CHAPTER**True or False**

1. The only command to husbands in Ephesians 5:22-33 is that they love their wives. _____
2. The Greek word translated love in the command to husbands means a human kind of love. _____

Fill in the Blanks

The positive qualities of love expressed in chapter one are: _____,
 _____, _____,
 _____, _____,
 _____.

FOR MEDITATION

Coordination is a *must* in building the marital "body beautiful." Both the husband and the wife must make healthy contributions to coordination.

EXERCISES

1. Why does Paul use the word used almost exclusively for divine love rather than the word for human love in describing the love a husband should have for his wife?

2. Mention a time when patience on the part of the husband could have strengthened your marriage.

3. Explain in your own words the meaning of "Love believes all things."

chapter two

The Loving Husband's Restraints Enhance Coordination

When a husband is filled with divine love there are things he *does* for his wife and the marriage. This is love in action. But there is another facet to this divine love: there are some things a loving husband does *not* do!

The coordination of the marital “body beautiful” is due in great part to the restraints of a loving husband..

Husbands are commanded by the Apostle Paul to love their wives. We have shown in the previous chapter that the Ephesians passage has three broad, sweeping applications to that love: the husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church—enough to die for her; he is to love his wife as his own body—nourishing and cherishing her; he is to love his wife enough to break emotional ties with his parents—leaving parents and cleaving to his wife.

These applications present a poignant, penetrating love. They do not, however, deal specifically with the nature of divine love. Our concern in these early chapters is to show the essence of that love by investigating those features of it as expressed in First Corinthians 13.

We have seen some positive features of love; now we shall examine the statements which tell us what divine love does not do—its restraints.

Let us look once again into the love chapter.

Love is Not Jealous

There is one aspect of jealousy we should mention at this point. The Scripture indicates that our God is a jealous God with respect to His children; God demands to be only object of worshipful affection. In this sense it is correct for a man to be jealous concerning his wife. As far as her relationship with others is concerned, he has a right to expect that he be her only object of *romantic* affection.

Paul’s statement about divine love in interpersonal relationships is that love is not jealous. If the husband is jealous of his wife as a person he probably will be suspect of her in every area of her life, in every relationship she shares with others. When this is true, he has “emotionally kidnapped” his wife.

Jealousy taints everything it touches. It will spread a cloud of gloom over the home—a dark, ominous cloud. There is little sunshine in the home where jealousy abounds.

Love is not jealous. Jealousy and coordination are mutually exclusive. The loving husband is not jealous.

Love Does Not Brag

Remember, we are discussing the husband who is filled with divine love; this husband will not spend time bragging about himself, resulting in the neglect of his wife’s emotional needs. The loving husband does not boast.

The man who boasts about himself will have little time or interest in commenting on the good qualities of his wife, or even to notice her good qualities.

Boasting grates on those who must live with it. Even when we realize that boasting is usually nothing more than the display of an inferiority complex turned inside-out, it is still perturbing to hear.

Divine love simply does not brag. This is one of those restraints a man will exercise for his wife when he is controlled by such love.

The restraint of the spirit of bragging will help build beautiful coordination in a marriage. The husband full of God’s love will not brag.

Love is Not Arrogant

Love is not “puffed up.” We commonly refer to such a state of mind as *arrogance*.

The husband who loves his wife in the way Paul explains he should will not maintain an attitude of arrogance. *Attitude* is the most obvious thing about us; we may attempt to obscure arrogance and conceit but they cannot be hidden.

On an occasion when I was a student in the seminary a friend and I encountered an acquaintance of mine who was a total stranger to my friend. The three of us walked together for a few minutes. When my friend and I were alone, he said, “That fellow never one time gave you the courtesy of turning to look at you while we talked.” He sensed a bad spirit in my acquaintance, one of arrogance.

A few days later, in conversation with yet another friend, the name of the “rude”

acquaintance was mentioned. The second friend responded with, “Oh, you mean that fellow who would gradually decrease into nothing if you stuck him with a pin?” He also had been repulsed by my acquaintance.

Arrogance!

A spirit of arrogance is not conducive to strong human relationships. It is a poisonous deterrent to spiritual coordination within the home. Such spiritual arrogance will have devastating effect upon all of one’s relationships—a deeply negative effect on a marriage.

The husband filled with divine love for his wife will be free from a spirit of arrogance. The result? Freedom from one of the causes of marital clumsiness.

Love Does Not Act Unbecomingly

The root ideas of the word “unbecomingly, unseemly” are rudeness and vulgarity. We shall discuss the concept of vulgarity, which is the ultimate extreme in rudeness.

The word is used in the first chapter of Romans in a discussion of things that are lewd. Divine love does not dwell on that which is vulgar or lewd.

Vulgarity and lewdness will make the home into a spiritual ghetto, and the slum-like atmosphere will rob the home of its sanctity.

Although it is possible for the wife to interject vulgarity and lewdness into a marriage, it is fair to assume that most of it is introduced by the husband. Divine love has no place within its atmosphere for that which is so unbecoming. The husband who loves his wife the way he is commanded in Scripture will not include vulgarity in his relationship to his wife.

The responsibility at this juncture lies heavily upon the husband. Freedom from vulgarity in some marriages could most likely be an immediate “open door” to spiritual coordination between the two spouses.

Lewdness and divine love are mutually exclusive. Lewdness excludes coordination—divine love excludes lewdness.

Love Will Not Seek its Own

“Seeking its own” is selfishness. It has been taught by many that selfishness is the most basic sin of all. It is not; *self-confidence* is the most basic sin of all. Self-desire, though is one of the first manifestations of the sinful problem of self-confidence.

It must be apparent why this is so devastating to marriage. If the husband’s and wife’s desires are not always the same, disagreements will obviously occur. This can create problems. Where selfishness *abounds* it will create problems.

It is true that when the two come to an impasse the wife is to yield to the divine leadership given to her husband. This is God’s plan.

We suggest there are two reasons why a husband (or any person) demands his way. First, the passion to win every argument comes from a person’s know-it-all attitude—all of us have been infected with it. The know-it-all husband will not allow any of his suggestions to be questioned; he is offended if they are. He has spoken and his wife *must* recognize his absolute authority.

Second, a husband may demand his own way simply out of stubbornness. Stubbornness is a direct result of the know-it-all attitude, and a specific demonstration of it. God help the wife who is married to a man plagued with severe stubbornness and does not know it—or does not care.

A selfish husband will rob his marriage of its very “heart.” But he will not live a self-centered life when he is filled with the love of God. Rather than on himself, his interests in the marital relationship—as prompted by the Holy Spirit—will be on the bride of his youth. Much of his joy will be found in bringing delight to her.

Such a spirit will promote coordination in the marital body.

Love is Not Easily Provoked

We have mentioned earlier that love is longsuffering with people, meaning “afar-from anger.” The very opposite of longsuffering is “being easily provoked.” Love is not easily provoked—is not close to anger.

The angry person, the explosive person who is always in danger of losing his temper, will have those nearest and dearest to him always walking “on thin ice.” He is a disruption in every relationship he possesses. It is true of the angry husband. The husband is to love his wife with the love of God Himself, and this kind of love is not easily provoked.

It is the responsibility of the husband to bring his life under the control of the Holy Spirit. While few things will disrupt coordination in marriage like an ill-controlled temper, few things will contribute to the spiritual coordination between spouses like the loving husband who is not easily provoked.

Filled with divine love the husband will not be easily provoked. Coordination will be greatly enhanced.

Love Does Not Take Account of Any Wrongs it Suffers

“Love thinketh no evil.” The basic thought of the phrase is that there is no “revenge motive” in divine love. Love does not give consideration to the evil done unto it.

Husbands and wives have all offended each other. Divine love within the marriage means that no record is kept of such offences. We can see the picture of such record-keeping in our mind’s eye: someone sitting at a desk making an entry into a ledger book concerning an offense; the date, the place, the offense which occurred. If you have been the victim of that kind of recording, you can almost hear the scratching of the quill on the paper as the offense is registered in the book. One thing is certain of the recorder: divine love is missing from the heart of that person.

The husband filled with divine love does not keep track of things his wife does to irritate or offend him. He does not “store them up” in order to throw them back at his wife at an opportune time during a disagreement. He does not keep such records.

The husband may possess—by the power of the forgiving Christ Who lives within him—the capacity to forget any injuries.

What a wonderful contribution he can make toward spiritual coordination in his marriage, toward building the “body beautiful,” if he is willing to receive the divine help which will free him from the revenge motive.

Love Does Not Rejoice in Unrighteousness/Iniquity

When anyone “rejoices” in iniquity or unrighteousness it reveals a terrible degeneration of the human heart.

There is dual connotation to this rejoicing in unrighteousness. First, there is the concept of rejoicing or “enjoying” when someone else engages in iniquity. For example, some enjoy the ways of deceit of another. We have been encouraged to do so by the movie industry and television. Ingenious deceit marks off the guilty ones as “clever” when they “get away” with their duplicity.

Second, there is the concept of being glad when some unrighteous thing happens to another person; being glad they get “tripped up” or involved in trouble. Could some husbands become so resentful that they are glad this happens to their wives?

Divine love will not rejoice in unrighteousness from any perspective—it has no place for iniquity. Unbridled iniquity and unrighteousness ruin any hope of coordination.

Let us now recap the thrust of these first two chapters. Paul has commanded husbands to love their wives (Eph. 5:25). This is a divine kind of love he has in mind, the same

quality of love that God possesses for the human race.

He commands divine love in Ephesians five, and he gives careful, detailed explanation of it in First Corinthians 13.

In the previous chapter we viewed the positive expressions of divine love in marriage. As Paul outlines these positive expressions he tells us that love is patient and kind; he reminds us that love rejoices in the truth; he informs us that love bears up under all things, believes with reference to all things, hopes all things and endures all things. He makes it clear that love can “take anything.” The husband who is filled with divine love will be able to handle the pressures which inevitably come into marriage.

In this present chapter we have noted the negative restraints of divine love. Paul writes that love is not jealous, not boastful, not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly, does not seek its own, is not easily provoked, does not take account of any offenses it suffers, does not rejoice in unrighteousness.

The man who is filled with the Holy Spirit will have both the positive and negative expressions of this God-kind of love toward his wife ...

... and he will greatly enhance and encourage the coordination which must occur within a marriage in order for it to be a “graceful body.”

REVIEW THE CHAPTER

Fill in the Blanks

The negative love features expressed in this chapter are: _____,
_____, _____, _____,
_____, _____, _____.

FOR MEDITATION

Think on the following statement: The husband is to love His wife as Christ loved the church—enough to die for her; he is to love his wife as his own body—nourishing and cherishing her; he is to love his wife enough to break emotional ties with his parents—leaving his parents and cleaving to his wife.

EXERCISES

1. Evaluate the statement that the husband “has a right to expect that he be her (the wife’s) only object of romantic affection.”

2. List a few ways that selfishness has a bad effect on a marriage.

3. Explain and evaluate the statement that “love does not take account of any wrongs it suffers.”

chapter three

The Sincere Wife's Respectful Submission Enriches Coordination

Coordination is achieved in marriage when the husband possesses divine love and the wife is willingly submissive. In Ephesians five, verses 22 and 24 both speak of the wife's submission to her husband. The submission Paul has in mind is possible only as the wife is filled with the Holy Spirit.

The most important principle of submissiveness taught in the New Testament is that the Christian is to be submissive to the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the highest, holiest of all submissions taught in the word of God.

There is another principle of submission taught in New Testament; it has to do with interhuman relationships. While all Christians are to be submissive to one another, the New Testament is specific about submission in three "categories": children are to be submissive to their parents; employees are to be submissive to their employers; wives are to be submissive to their husbands. If children and employees are submissive, then the parent or employer has the right to discipline" that child or that employee. Husbands do not possess such authority. Submission by the wife must be voluntary.

This means the submission of the wife is all important. Her husband (even a husband filled with divine love) cannot force submissiveness upon her; it must come from within her own being. It will come as she receives the filling of the Holy Spirit. When she is submissive, coordination between her and her husband will be enriched.

Understanding the Scriptural Foundation of Submissiveness

The wife must understand the difference between status and role; between our standing *before* God and our assigned responsibility *from* God.

Husbands and wives are equal in the sight of God. Wives must realize this; every human being has equal status in the sight of God. The Father is no Respector of persons, no Acceptor of faces. The statement is well-worn and trite, but ground is still level at the cross. The New Testament is distinctly clear that in Jesus Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free man, male nor female—we are all one in Christ.

There is a *difference* between status and role. In status husbands and wives are equal; in assigned role they are not. The employee has one responsibility, the employer another; the parent has one responsibility, the child another; the husband has one responsibility, the wife another.

The Headship of Jesus over the church provides a very apt illustration for the husband’s leadership. In Matthew 16 Christ speaks of the church He is forming. He clearly indicates that *He* is the One establishing the church and He implies the church is under *His* direction. The Ephesians five passage makes it plain that the church is the body, He is the Head. The church lies totally under His direction.

Ephesians four presents another picture of the church as the body of Christ. Each member is growing up into the head Who supplies each joint, and out of which union each joint *functions*. The Head obviously gives life to the church, but it also gives direction, leadership to the church.

The book of Acts records the spread of Christianity. It is reiterated again and again that the church moved forward as it responded to the leadership of the Holy Spirit. It is an obvious conclusion that submissiveness to another person includes being responsive to the direction, the leadership of that person.

The submissive wife, then, is one who places herself under the direction of her husband. The word “submission” is composed of two Greek words. One of them means “under”; the other means “to subject.” The concept is that of one person subjecting himself or herself to another person.

The word has been employed in classical Greek as a military term describing men and ships that have been formed for battle; it speaks of soldiers marshalled in military order, under a commanding officer. The word portrays one person becoming totally available to another person without ambition or plans apart from the one who gives direction.

Paul maintains in our Ephesian passage that men ought to love their wives as their own bodies. It means a man is to love his wife as his own body. *It means just that.*

Let us apply Paul’s statement to the concept of submissiveness, meaning to be without plans or ambitions apart the head. Think of our arms and feet. Think of our anklebones. The anklebones were made for our use. It would be tragic if our anklebones suddenly decided they have plans and ambitions of their own. Great havoc would be the result. Great havoc is also the result within marriage when wives refuse to be submissive,

insisting their plans and ambitions have precedence over their husbands’ leadership.

This is the foundation the New Testament lays concerning the wife’s submission. It is imperative that wives understand this scriptural foundation for submission. Her grasp of what God is saying will help develop coordination in her marriage.

Understanding the Scriptural Application of Submissiveness

Earlier in this chapter we presented three interpersonal submissions: employees to employers, children to parents, wives to husbands. The application of this scriptural principle sheds a floodlight of meaning on the wife’s submission.

The submission of children and employees serves to illustrate the fulfillment and satisfaction which may be found in the wife’s submission to her husband. Employees will live in constant frustration when they refuse submission to the plans and ambitions of their employers; it can be even more costly, employees could lose their jobs in such instances.

There is, however, great satisfaction in the submission of the employee. The “team-work concept” with the employer as the head can be productive, satisfying and pleasing to both parties. There will never be vocational fulfillment without submission on the part of the employee; there will be fulfillment and satisfaction when the employee possesses an attitude of submission, of cooperation.

All of us know of children who rebel against the authority and plans of their parents. Not only does it cause great consternation for both children and parents, it can lead to tragedy. Young people may, however, have wonderfully fulfilling lives simply by submitting to their parents. It is the will of God, and young people can enjoy the tasteful spice of richest satisfaction by living in submissive harmony with their parents.

Because it is the will of God, wives find their greatest fulfillment and satisfaction in submissiveness to their husbands. The New Testament application of this truth is that the wife make herself “totally available” to her husband and to the Lord Jesus. This “total availability” means realization, gratification, fulfillment.

The wife should never take the attitude “I will if he will.” The husband is not allowed to love his wife conditionally, never “I will if she will.” He is to love her as Christ loved the church, regardless of her response. Likewise, the submission of the wife is not postured upon the husband “doing his duty” loving her as he should.

In the last verse of Ephesians five, Paul says the wife is to reverence or “respect” her husband. This is submissiveness in one word. She is to respect him, submit to him in private when only she and her husband know of it. She is to submit to him within the family fellowship, realizing it will do much for family harmony. She is to submit to him in the public

sector always bolstering him. This respect in public will elevate the respect her husband receives from others. (It is true that the husband’s love is to be displayed in the same three areas private, within the family, in the public sector.)

Understanding the Consequences of a Negative Attitude Toward Submissiveness

Some wives have offered negative suggestions concerning the New Testament concept of submission—from “I just won’t do it” to “I won’t do it but I’ll make him think I am.”

The sincere wife will consider refusing her submission in light of her walk with the Lord. She will know that to embrace any other approach to her marriage is outside the Scriptures and outside the will of God for her life. Because of her love for the Lord she knows she must not reject the will of God.

There is a statement in the Gospel according to John (15:7) which teaches us we can have anything we ask if we abide in Christ and His word abides in us. Any time we exalt our wisdom above God’s word we close the door to answered prayer. So much of the prayer support for the work of God is from our ladies; it is grievous to think one of them would close the door to answered prayer because she consciously, willfully refused one section of biblical truth.

The refusal of a wife to be submissive to her husband closes the door to the ultimate in marital bliss.

In a real sense a wife who refuses the biblical teaching concerning her submission to her husband is saying, “God doesn’t know what He is doing—I’ve got more wisdom in my little finger than my husband has in his whole body.” She may be right about having superior wisdom, but even that does not cancel out the teachings of God’s word.

The context in which this word “submit” is found is quite interesting. The statement in the Greek actually reads: “being subject to one another in fear of Christ. The wives to their own husbands as to the Lord.” (Eph. 5:21-22). The main verb of the context is found in verse 18—“Continue to be filled with the Spirit.”

Between verses 18 and 22 there are several grammatical “purpose clauses,” indicating what will happen when one is filled with the Holy Spirit.

Be filled with the Spirit [resulting in] speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord [also resulting in] giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ [also resulting in] submitting yourselves to one another in the fear of God

[in particular resulting in] you wives submitting yourselves unto your own husbands as unto the Lord. (author’s brackets)

The main verb is “be filled” with the Holy Spirit. Expressions such as “speaking, giving thanks, submitting” are the result of being filled with the Holy Spirit.

When a wife is filled with the Holy Spirit, she will enjoy everything He develops within her life. She will not consider having a negative attitude about submission when she is filled with the Spirit.

The results of being Spirit-filled in this context are described with words of excitement, praise, joy—singing, making melody in your heart, giving thanks. The entire force of the context points to the joy and excitement for the wife who is filled with the Holy Spirit.

The sincere wife would not want to miss out on such joy and on the blissful coordination in her marriage being Spirit-filled brings.

Pertinent Questions Wives Ask

There are many questions wives may ask concerning submission. We shall discuss three which are pertinent to wives’ thinking on this matter.

“Do I, as a wife, have no personal walk with God of my own ?”

Just as submissive employees and children have personal walks with God, so do submissive wives. There are countless reasons why wives should have their own walk with the Lord.

First, a wife finds grace for submission only through a personal walk with God. We have earlier noted that submission is the result of being filled with the Holy Spirit.

Second, no husband makes demands on every minute of his wife’s life. Employees do not have demands on every moment of their lives. There will be much freedom within the framework of one’s responsibilities for personal leadership from the Lord. It is the same with a wife who walks in the Spirit.

Third, the husband who longs for his wife to reach spiritual maturity will encourage her to look to God for guidance and direction.

Fourth, most husbands will look to their wives for assistance in interpreting God’s will for the family. They will do so with greater confidence when their wives have a personal walk with God. One of the most important things I have done financially—purchase a house—I did because of what the Lord told my wife. I am grateful for her walk in Christ.

Fifth, wives will be with the children much more than the husband. A loving husband

is grateful to God for a wife “in touch” with the Lord, who teaches and trains the children with enlightenment from the Lord.

Sixth, the husband needs prayer for himself. It will be wonderful comfort to know his own life is bathed in the prayers of his wife.

Seventh, husbands want their wives to be the “angels” they imagine them to be. The wife will be that angel only as she daily communes with the heavenly Father.

Here is a seeming paradox: the “submissive” wife must have a closer walk with Christ than the “non-submissive” wife. Supernatural living is essential for the submissive wife.

“What if my husband encourages me in my individuality, my ambition and my self-assertiveness, and thinks my rebellion is cute ?”

When a husband takes such a posture concerning his wife, the marriage has serious problems; he is encouraging her to sin. He is encouraging her rebellion against the perfect plan of God.

A husband’s willingness to reject the scriptural plan for his marriage may be a “cop out.” A very timid man may have married his wife because of her “pushiness”—perhaps she made him feel complete. Or, a husband just may not be willing to take his rightful place in the marriage relationship.

Whatever the cause, it is not the plan of our Lord for a husband to refuse his responsibilities in the marital union.

But if he should, what should the wife do?

The wife should become adamant in her refusal to disobey God. She should inform her husband they are living in disobedience, regardless of how well they enjoy the arrangement.

She should teach him what the Scriptures say. She should pray for him, continually reminding him that she looks to him for direction from God.

The husband who openly invites his wife to be head of family will not have a biblical marriage.

“Are there limits? Does a time ever come when I as a wife should refuse to do the things my husband desires or demands of me?”

Obviously there are such times.

There have been rare instances when a man forced his wife into harlotry. A Christian wife could never believe this to be the will of God for her.

Some husbands—for social and business reasons—have sought to entice their wives into the use of alcoholic beverages. This is outside the will of God.

In extreme instances, there are limits beyond which the wife cannot go.

While these extreme instances are not beyond reality for some marriages, it is *quite important* that the wife not be “watching” for instances in which she will not obey. It is unhealthy for her to “look” for situations in which she can reject her husband’s leadership.

The enhancement, the enrichment of marriage by the wife!

The wife’s commitment to submissiveness brings delight to her husband and to the Lord. *It brings great delight to her!*

She will greatly aid spiritual coordination in marriage. The husband is the head, the wife is the body of the marital union. The head and body must have precise, “perfect” coordination for the well-being of the marriage-

The husband

empowered by the Spirit of Christ

must love his wife with a God-kind-of-Love!

The wife

must respond to her husband’s leadership

with a lovely attitude of submission.

It is voluntary on her part by the power of the Holy Spirit Who lives within her.

And it brings great joy to the marriage.

When that healthy, beautiful, spiritual coordination exists...

... what a graceful body will result!

REVIEW THE CHAPTER**True or False**

1. The wife must understand the difference between status and role; between our standing *before* God and our assigned responsibility *from* God. _____
2. Wives must realize this; every human being has equal status in the sight of God. _____

Fill in the Blanks

1. The submission of the wife that Paul has in mind is possible only as the wife is _____.
2. Submission of the wife must be _____.

FOR MEDITATION

Wives find their greatest fulfillment and satisfaction in submissiveness to their husbands.

EXERCISES

1. Give your understanding of the statement, "There is a difference between status and role."

2. Express your thoughts about why the Bible uses the human body as an example of how wives should be submissive to their husbands.

3. In light of Ephesians 5:22-23 express your opinion about the belief of some that husbands are to be submissive to their wives.

4. What should a wife do if her husband looks to her as the head of the marriage relationship?

part two

***Gracefulness Is Prevented
By Clumsiness***

He stood six feet, six inches tall. The high school coach who discovered him was seeking to make him into a basket player. It was painful to watch his awkward movements.

“Why is he so clumsy?” I kept asking myself. Honestly I had never seen anyone so clumsy.

“If he were not so clumsy he could become an outstanding basketball player,” I thought to myself.

But why was he so clumsy? It was probably the result of total inexperience. Perhaps no one had ever encouraged him to participate in athletics. In time he did develop coordination and became an outstanding high school and college player. There are other reasons for clumsiness in bodily movements: too much weight; lack of concentration; disinterest in physical dexterity; the inability to develop coordination between mind and body.

Regardless of the causes of clumsiness—which is a lack of coordination—it is not a thing of beauty. *It is graceless.*

Coordination between the husband and wife gives marriage a breath-taking beauty. There is, however, some clumsiness in all marriages. Consequently, the beauty we desire in our marriage may be jaded or non-existent.

But *why* all this marital clumsiness?

In this section we are suggesting both *hidden* and *surface* causes for marital clumsiness.

chapter four

Clumsiness by Hidden and Underlying Causes

Many husbands and wives fervently desire their marriages to be all that God wants them to be—but some are victims of marital clumsiness. They have not discovered the victory which is taught in Scripture.

There is victory over this awkwardness and one of the first steps toward it is to identify and understand the *hidden* and *underlying* factors which interrupt the flow of the husband's divine love and the wife's willful submission.

The factors are clearly described in the New Testament. They are three in number—the flesh, the devil and the world.

Let's investigate these hidden causes of marital problems.

The Flesh

We shall understand the New Testament term “flesh” as we spend some time in the Garden of Eden.

Adam and Eve unquestionably enjoyed the ecstasy of fellowship with God and each other before their disobedience. From Eve's creation until that tragic moment Adam was surely the head of that relationship. He surely loved Eve with a wonderful, divine love; she must have enjoyed ultimate fulfillment as she responded to his leadership.

When they ate of the forbidden fruit, however, something overwhelmingly dreadful happened to them. As God announced they were to be cast from the garden, He explained His reasoning. “The man is become as one of us, to know good and evil.” Gen: 3:22

Of course they had not been suddenly placed on a level with God in knowing good and evil. Romans 1:22 is an interpretive statement of what happened to Adam and Eve when they ate the forbidden fruit.

The verse is found in a passage recording the story of man’s rejection of God and his fall deeper and deeper into sin. The cause of both is expressed as being “Professing themselves to be wise.” That is the meaning of the phrase “the knowledge of good and evil.” That is our flesh.

For years we were under the impression that these words “good and evil” signified that which is *morally* good and evil. The moral and ethical connotation, however, does not capture the full meaning of these two words. They denote that which is to advantage or disadvantage. They can be employed in this manner: “It is good to exercise; it is evil to overeat.” That is, it is to our *advantage* to exercise; it is to our *disadvantage* to overeat. So when Adam ate of that forbidden fruit there came into him a faith, a *confidence* that he now knew what was best. He thought he knew what was best for himself—and for everyone else.

When we were born (*all of us!*), we inherited this same self-confidence from Adam—the confidence that we are wise. The truth is, we are actually of the opinion that we wiser than God Himself.

In our book *Cain-likeness to Christ-likeness* we explain that the lengthy account of Cain’s life is found in the Bible to indicate *what we are like*. Cain’s story is totally unimportant to the development of the Old Testament; however, almost an entire chapter is given to Cain and his descendents. It is recorded because Cain was the first person to *inherit* the know-it-all attitude.

Cain is a picture of the “old man” in each of us. The “old man” is our flesh—our self-confidence—and all that “flesh” has produced in us.

The flesh is a *hidden* and *underlying* cause of spiritual failure—and we are applying it here to marital clumsiness in particular. The flesh, as the lower nature, exerts influential pressure from within a person.

As an integral and powerful force, the flesh causes a lack of coordination between the head and the body in marriage. It is a major contributor to marital clumsiness.

The Devil

Another—and often hidden—barrier to love and submissiveness in marriage is the dark, devious personality of the devil—Satan himself. He hates exposure, but exposure he must have if we are to enjoy the “ultimate” in marriage.

We do not know everything about Satan, but the Scripture does give us some insight.

Two Old Testament passages—one from Isaiah and another from Ezekiel—are considered by many as references to Satan. We quote from each book, indicating some of the features of the destructive one.

How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! for thou has said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the throne of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most high. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee, saying is this the man that made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof; that opened not the house of his prisoners? Isa. 14:12-17

Son of man take up a lamentation upon the king Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord God; Thou sealest up the sun, full of wisdom, and perfect beauty. Thou has been in Eden the Garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering; the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold; the workmanship of thy tabrets and thy pipes was prepared in the day that thou wast created. Thou are the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. Thou was perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, still iniquity was found in thee. By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned, therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. Thine heart was lifted up because of thine beauty, thou has corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness. I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee. Thou hast defiled thy sanctuary by the multitude of thine iniquities by the iniquity of thy traffic. Ezek. 28:12-18a

These passages yield several important facts about Satan. He is under the authority of our Lord; in His own time the Lord will utterly dethrone and destroy Satan.

Satan was created perfect and with ultimate beauty; was quite ambitious and desired to be equal with God; rebellion resulted in his being cast from heaven. He “corrupted his wisdom.”

Beyond these two passages there are three other scriptural accounts important to our understanding of him: (1) his conversation with Eve; (2) his conversations about and actions toward Job; (3) his conversations with the Lord Jesus.

These accounts reveal that Satan is a “master of deceit”; that he wants to destroy our faith in God; that he knows how to use our emotions against us (see Job’s life); that he seeks primarily to take away from us the will of God for our lives.

We also learn something of Satan from the names ascribed to him in Scripture. His

name, Satan, means *adversary*. He is Lucifer, son of morning. He is also referred to as the evil one, the accuser of the brethren and the god of this world.

Perhaps the one verse concerning Satan which stands above the others in importance is John 8:44, where our Lord says to the Pharisees:

Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of himself for he is a liar, and the father of it.

Even this brief overview of Satan allows us to see he has great strength and force—and is bent on destruction.

While the flesh is an influential pressure from within Satan is an influential force from without.

Why is Satan so viciously opposed to marriages of the stripe proposed in the New Testament?

First, such marriages stand in opposition to his purpose and intentions. He is on a mission of death and destruction, and he has little opportunity to destroy a marriage in which the husband possesses a God-kind of love for the wife and the wife willfully submits to her husband. Satan can do little to that marriage.

A second reason for Satan’s opposition: such a marriage will bring “panic” to Satan and his kingdom. The marital union Paul describes in Ephesians five cannot be realized apart from the filling of the Holy Spirit, and we continuously walk in the Spirit only as we understand our oneness with Christ. When we live out of our oneness with Christ we greatly damage Satan’s kingdom. So, if a Christian has motivation for marriage on this level, Satan knows his own kingdom will suffer because of it.

The World

We have discussed two of the hidden causes of marital clumsiness—the flesh and the devil. The third is what the New Testament calls simply “the world.”

Paul offers a testimony in Galatians 6:14—he says that by the cross he is crucified to the world and the world is crucified to him.

This word from Paul implies there was a time in his life when he had been strongly influenced by the world. We are all influenced by the world infinitely more than we realize. Before we can adequately grasp how this influence comes we must know what “the world” is.

The world is made up of the members of the human race—both saved and unsaved—who are not living under the direction of the Holy Spirit. It is that vast number of people who are largely or totally living according to the flesh and under the influence of Satan.

This working definition of “the world” includes the overwhelming majority of the people on the earth. It includes most of the people we know, and with whom we associate.

We must consider the extent to which we are influenced by these people. Their influence upon us is enormous. None of us wants to be classified as “different.” We will rearrange our clothing if we fear it is not in style. There is something that makes us want to conform.

Paul is acutely aware of our temptation as he warns us, “Be not conformed to this world.” Remember that Israel was given the ungodly Saul as king because they desired to be like the nations around them. This strong tendency to conform is a curse to many people, and we cannot deny its stronghold on *us*. The “world” has a strong grip on many of us.

The flesh, the devil and the world form a spiritual “Bermuda Triangle” and each one seems to be involved in the work of the other two.

At times we attribute certain actions or attitudes to the flesh, the devil *or* the world. We should, however, credit the flesh, the devil *and* the world in most instances—the three are *allied* against us, and against our marriages.

The flesh is an inherent part of us; it influences us negatively from within. It is a part of us from birth—it is the most basic feature of our “old man.” The flesh is a cogent, persuasive inner influence. The devil and the world are negative influences from without; they are powerful, convincing, compelling. Though the influence of these two is rampant, it is quite subtle. It is almost imperceptible to us. We can be under the influence of Satan and the world without realizing it. These three—the flesh, the devil, the world—combine themselves into a forceful predominance in our lives. Hidden persuaders.

Since these three forces are in strong opposition to our marriages, we must keep ourselves spiritually alert to their hidden pressures on even “blissful” marriages.

Developing physical coordination is usually painful. Physical dexterity comes only when we “push” our bodies into shape. The price is never too great for healthy physical coordination between the mind and the body.

Spiritual coordination often is even more painful in its development.

Where there have been years of spiritual clumsiness, “rounding ourselves into spiritual shape” can be quite painful. As we view the “surface symptoms” of the flesh, the devil and the world in the next two chapters, let us allow the Holy Spirit to “dig deeply” into marital problems, uprooting them and opening the door to our particular “heaven on earth.”

This is the *only* way we will build the “marital body beautiful”; overcoming clumsiness.

REVIEW THE CHAPTER**True or False**

1. The sin nature that came into Adam was a confidence that he was now wise. That is our flesh. _____
2. The words “good” and “evil” in the name of the tree in the Garden of Eden always mean moral good and evil. _____
3. Cain is a picture of the “old man” in each of us. The “old man” is our flesh—our self confidence—and all that the “flesh” has produced in us. _____

Fill in the Blanks

1. Satan hates exposure, but _____
_____.
2. We are all influenced by the world _____.

FOR MEDITATION

1. Consider the many ways the flesh, the devil, and the world may have had a negative effect on the coordination of your marriage.

EXERCISES

1. Evaluate the thought that the sin nature we inherited from Adam is a “know-it-all attitude.”

2. From your perspective, how does a “know-it-all attitude” disrupt coordination in a marriage?

3. List ways you have seen Satan disrupt marriages.

chapter five

Clumsiness By Surface And Immediate Causes (I)

The flesh is a part of the inner person and much of its influence is hidden—it works “underground.” There are, however, outward expressions of the flesh; these expressions are also encouraged by the devil and the world. Such *surface* and *immediate* expressions of the flesh are the cause of spiritual clumsiness.

We have already mentioned that the works of the flesh are vividly revealed in the personality of Cain. In the two chapters before us we shall list some of these surface factors, exposing them as creating discord within marriages. We discussed two of Cain’s surface problems—jealousy and anger—in chapter two. We will not discuss them here.

The Passion to Initiate

Cain presented an offering to the Lord which God had not prescribed—Cain did it on his own. He did so partially because of “the flesh’s” passion to *initiate*. Cain was an initiator. Our own fleshly nature makes *us* “initiators.”

The world bombards us daily with suggestions to initiate. We are often brought face to face with some of the world’s most outstanding “pushy people.” They make an all-out attempt to “move” us, to motivate us in getting things going—whether we have any direction from the Lord or not.

Satan would *drive* us to a life of initiation if he could have full sway with us. Remember how he challenged the Lord to turn the stones into bread, to jump from the temple roof, to bow down and worship him (Satan), promising Him all of the kingdoms of the world in return? Satan specializes in *temptations-to-initiate* activities which are contrary to the will of the Father.

We have the threefold prompting; here it is a combined

force to make us initiators. When marital mates yield to this pressure, it will hinder the flow of divine love from the husband and willful submissiveness from the wife. Coordination between them will be impossible. The husband will seek to lead his wife by his own initiation, without a word from the Lord; the wife will face temptation to initiate herself, apart from the husband’s leadership. Gracelessness is the consequence.

The Spirit of Competition

The New Testament makes it clear Cain was driven by a spirit of competition—that he killed Abel because his own works were evil and Abel’s were righteous (1 John 3:12). Cain would not have killed his brother if both had been accepted or rejected.

Cain was “bound and determined” to come out *on top*—and he failed. The flesh produces a spirit of competition.

The atmosphere of the world is permeated with the spirit of competition. Someone has said, “Practically everything I do is in competition with someone else.” Satan revealed his own spirit of competition when he sought to be on a level with God; and he attempts to foist such an attitude of competitiveness on us.

We should give special attention to the concept of competition in marriage.

Because of the husband’s God-given place of leadership in the home, the allied forces of the flesh, the devil and the world will constantly tempt the wife to assert herself, and the spirit of competition may be the result. She will be tempted to gain leadership of the marriage or at least be the “second head of the body.” When this happens, all spiritual coordination is destroyed, replaced by an emotional “tug of war” between the spouses.

Competition on the husband’s part may have him opposing any advances his wife could make in life. Without realizing it, he can rob her of her personhood. This same competitive attitude on the husband’s part will also take his mind and interest from his family when he is engaged in competition with his peers.

The “last” thing marital mates need is a spirit of competition. If there is to be a relaxed, loving, coordinated relationship in the earth, marriage should be it.

Covetousness

The flesh produces covetousness. Cain was covetous; he wanted the attention and acceptance which belonged to Abel. Covetousness abounds in every area of life.

The world creates an atmosphere of strident covetousness. Satan was obviously covetous. He and the world will encourage the covetousness produced by the flesh.

Covetousness is debilitating to marriage. Husbands and wives who are afflicted with

it will make unreasonable demands on each other; such demands may rob each of them of the time and attention they should give to their children, their parents, or even to the Lord.

The uncontrolled desire for “things” will detract husbands and wives from each other. Covetousness will destroy any life, any relationship. It is extremely dangerous for it to be rampant within a marriage. It contributes to the clumsiness which some marriages possess.

Depression

“And his countenance fell.”

These words give us the clue to Cain’s covetousness, competition and jealousy; they also make it clear that he went into *depression* because he was rejected.

“Depression” has become a household word. We know not only what it means, we know how it feels. *Depression abounds!* We see it in the faces of people everywhere. The world has well promoted depression.

Is Satan in any way responsible for depression? Are there Scriptures which say as much? There are! When Satan attacked Job he began with the physical, but moved quickly toward negative emotions in Job. The cry of his wife, “Curse God and die,” indicates Satan’s attack was eventually on the emotions.

Depression is one of the most destructive of the negative emotions; it is quite devastating to the marriage relationship. It will keep husbands and wives from giving proper attention to each other; divine love and submission will be “stagnant” during times of depression. Marital mates—by the grace of God—must declare war on depression!

It is a consequence of the work of the flesh, the devil and the world—a severe consequence.

Stubbornness

When God looked upon the anger and fallen countenance of Cain, He offered him the opportunity to repent. Cain was adamant in his refusal. In the very next sentence we are told of the murder of Abel. Cain’s adamant refusal may be summed up in one word—*stubbornness*.

Since Cain is the first human being to inherit the sinful nature, he is the prototype of us all. It is true that stub-

bornness is one of the most common of all human faults. The flesh has produced stubbornness in seemingly everyone of us.

I was preaching in the Philippines through an interpreter when I said somewhat jokingly, “In the United States there are wives who feel their husbands are very stubborn, although I am certain that would not be true over here.” My attempts at humor had not gone over well up to that point, and I was shocked when the audience responded in uproarious laughter. I did not understand the response.

Then I noticed everyone was looking at the wife of the interpreter. Very shyly, he turned to me, saying, “Yes, we have that here too.” Her response had indicated a problem with stubbornness in the interpreter.

Yes, there is stubbornness in the Philippines—and every other place in the inhabited earth. It is one of the obvious characteristics of the human race. It is created by the flesh, agitated by the world.

Satan promotes stubbornness. The book of Ephesians says that in our days of rebellion we were doing the desires of Satan—he is a powerful generator of stubbornness.

Stubbornness robs a marital union of so much that is absolutely *vital*. Spouses alienate themselves emotionally from each other through stubbornness, causing ugly marital clumsiness.

Behind it is a stubborn flesh, devil and world.

Hatred and Bitterness

When we interpret the murder of Abel in the light of First John, chapter three, it is clear Cain committed murder out of hate. It did not take his anger long to boil over into hate.

Our “old man” is like that. It does not take long to develop bitterness and hate. It is a work of the flesh! “The world” is full of such hate and bitterness. The increasing number of murders in our nation is testimony to that fact, as is the increasing number of divorces. The influences of the world will never lift us above our hate and bitterness.

Hate is also generated by Satan. The same passage in First John which recounts the murder of Abel (chapter three) also informs us Cain was of the evil one—his hatred was promoted by Satan!

Satan desires, even demands us to have hate and bitterness toward our spouses. Many of the problems within marriage, when allowed to fester, eventually degenerate into hatred of the marriage partners toward each other. A marriage is almost wrecked at this point. It needs corrective attention.

We have reviewed some of the “surface symbols” of the flesh, the devil and the world. These three are an effective alliance against our marriages. The *surface and immediate* causes of marital clumsiness which they produce are the reason for much tension in marriages. There is more to say concerning these surface symptoms.

REVIEW THE CHAPTER**Fill in the blanks**

Six Cain-like qualities; the flesh, the devil, and the world, work in our lives are:

FOR MEDITATION

Consider how any Cain-like qualities may have been a negative factor in your marriage. In what ways have you been guilty? In what ways has your spouse been guilty?

EXERCISES

1. Since the husband is the head of the marital body, how can he go wrong when he initiates?

2. Which of the distractions to marital bliss discussed in this chapter do you believe is the most destructive—and why?

chapter six

Clumsiness By Surface And Immediate Causes (II)

We continue to present the deadly negative forces which “eat away” at the gracefulness of the marital body. These forces—prompted by the flesh, the devil and the world—hinder marriage coordination.

Since this chapter is a continuation of the previous one, we shall discuss more character traits of Cain—in whom we find a vivid and powerful illustration of the flesh.

Dishonesty

The Scripture informs us of two ways in which Cain was dishonest. He deceived Abel in order to isolate him in the field where he murdered him. Then when God inquired of the whereabouts of Abel, Cain claimed he did not know. He was both *subtle* and *blatant* in his dishonesty. The “flesh” always fosters dishonesty.

Dishonesty seems to be a part of the fabric of the world; the world seems proud of its ability to deceive. Dishonesty is so prevalent it is difficult to cash a check in public businesses. The foul odor of dishonesty has settled everywhere around us. Even some Christians are proud of their gains made through duplicity.

Satan is the father of dishonesty. In his first appearance on the stage of human history he told lies about God. Our Lord says he is a liar and the father of lies (John 8:44).

Dishonesty is a vicious enemy to marriages. In the marital union it is disgusting—and can be deadly. Dishonesty eats at the heart of a marriage like cancer.

If marriage partners cannot have complete confidence in the utter faithfulness of each other, it becomes difficult—if not impossible—to be submissive or loving.

Irresponsibility

“Am I my brother’s keeper?” So spoke Cain following his murder of Abel.

This emotional disclaimer was an attempt to escape responsibility. Cain was irresponsible. He was his brother’s keeper, and his very question indicates he *knew* he was.

There is an aura of irresponsibility in the world. It is everywhere. It is openly admitted, often without any sense of guilt, and with no intention of repentance. Some people are proud of their undetected irresponsibility.

Satan involves himself in irresponsibility—he promotes it. We may be certain of it because there is much dishonesty involved in irresponsibility, and Satan is the father of dishonesty.

Irresponsibility creates problems, *quite serious* problems in marriage.

A non-dependable marital mate causes tremendous grief to the marriage; often it is the cause for divorce. Irresponsibility can take away almost all marital joy, and it will create clumsiness for the marriage.

Gracelessness.

Feelings of Superiority

Before God’s rejection of him, Cain was certain the Lord would “heap praises” upon him for his ingenuity and industriousness. We are able to assume nothing else from the statement, “and his countenance fell,” following the rejection. Sometimes the flesh leaves us with a feeling of superiority.

Segments of the world at times generate an air of superiority. Some people are unattractive “personality-wise” because of an air of superiority. The world promotes that *superior* attitude.

The devil himself thought he should be on an equal with the Lord God—which would have placed him far above all other created things. He not only possesses an attitude of superiority, he promotes it. Such an attitude is injurious to marriage.

The husband who feels vastly superior to his wife may be embarrassed to have her around his friends and business associates. He may ignore her; he may socialize without her.

Feelings of superiority is not the most destructive force against marriages, but it is a factor which will make “ultimate gracefulness” impossible.

Self-pity

When God pronounced judgment on him for the murder of Abel, Cain said, “My punishment is greater than I can bear.” We are confident he *whined* it out. His is a classic case of self-pity. In that Cain is the prototype of us all, there is a good chance that all of us are victims of self-pity at least some of the time.

Self-pity certainly emanates from the world. It fills the air, influencing all of us. Some highly successful people are drowning in their self-pity.

Satan is involved in the promotion of self-pity. Think once more of Job’s wife who was an instrument of Satan in this instance. Is not her cry, “Curse God and die,” a form of self-pity? It is, and it reminds us that Satan and all his demons pervade the atmosphere about us seeking to promote self-pity in us.

Many Christians are plagued with self-pity and it has a tremendously negative effect on a marriage.

A husband who wallows in self-pity will not have divine love toward his wife. He will be so caught up in his own problems—real and imaginary—that he cannot express love to anyone, even a submissive wife. The wife who is victimized by self-pity will have her husband—if he loves her with a naive love—being submissive to her. Such a marriage will be pitiful and second rate. It will not demonstrate to the “on-looking” world a graceful body.

Fear

Cain’s demise led to a spirit of fear. His statement, “Everyone who finds me will kill me” indicates a man plagued with fear. In particular it was a fear of people and a fear of dying.

The “air around us” is saturated with an unpleasant aroma of fear. If the Lord does not return within the next century, historians likely will describe this era of history as a period of “unusual fear.”

The world is *dominated* by fear. Christ understands this fault in human nature. The only thing He continually warned against was fear.

Satan contributes to the dark atmosphere of fear. The story of the Gadarean demonic whom people attempted to chain illustrates Satan’s part in generating fear.

Fear will keep a marriage from functioning properly. Peter tells women to submit to their husbands without fear (1 Pet. 3:6). Some wives fear submission to their husbands,

fearing they are incompetent or will take advantage of them.

Fear will stand in the way of a man asserting his leadership in the home. Some husbands are simply *afraid* of their wives. Others are fearful any assertion of authority will drive their wives away or create a hostile situation.

Fear makes marital coordination impossible.

Paranoia

Paranoia is a distinctive type of fear. It is the imagining someone is attempting to harm us. Paranoia is one of the most destructive of all the characteristics produced by the flesh, the devil and the world.

Cain’s fear was born of paranoia. His “*Everyone who finds me will kill me*” is clear enough indication of the fact.

I asked a group of young people to make a list of five things which disturbed them most in their walk with the Lord. To my utter surprise the word “paranoia” appeared frequently on their lists. I preached a sermon on paranoia. An unusual number of people asked for taped copies of the message. Paranoia is one of the factors which saturates our society.

The Apostle Paul makes it clear that Satan promotes paranoia. He writes:

“For the weapons of our warfare not carnal, but are mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds. Casting down imaginations ...” Second Cor. 10:4-5

Imagination, though one of our greatest gifts, can be twisted by Satan into one of our greatest curses.

Paranoia will do strange things to a marriage. When marital partners suppose their mates are unfaithful or deceitful, many problems will evolve.

Paranoia hinders a wife in submitting herself to her husband. “Suspicious” will keep her from doing it.

A husband who has *given in* to paranoia will be deterred from expressing divine love to his wife. He will be hesitant in taking responsibilities as the leader of the home.

Marital coordination where paranoia abounds? Impossible.

Ambition

Cain’s passionate ambition is seen in his bringing the wrong offering to the Lord and in his building of a city. The man possessed many admirable qualities and he wanted them to be known. Ambition in Cain is an indication of the key problem of ambition is all of us.

When we are with certain people we actually are able to “feel” the spirit of ambition in them. They have such a passion for success it is detected by all who know them.

Satan does much to encourage a spirit of ambition. One who desired to be equal with God Himself is surely contaminated with a rampant spirit of ambition. Again, our threefold enemy of the flesh, the devil and the world presents ambition as if it were the most admirable trait one can possess.

Uncontrolled ambition is harmful to a marriage. Only two hours before typing this paragraph I learned of a man who was about to do great damage to his marriage because of his passion to “climb” in the business world. A husband with that kind of ambition is tempted to ignore the needs of his wife. Ambition can quell a man’s love for his wife.

An “ambitious” wife will find it difficult to be the spiritual body of her husband—to be submissive to his leadership and direction.

When the husband and wife are overly ambitious, their marriage is destined to be second or third rate. Such a couple may become famous or wealthy (or both !), but they will never enter into marital ecstasy as planned by the Lord.

Their marital body will be a most clumsy one.

Natural Virtues

We have indicated Cain possessed admirable qualities. His naming the city after his son Enoch reveals a kindness in him. He desired to do something for another.

Let us underscore this fact: “the world” is not altogether bad. Many atheistic people have sweet, gentle spirits; they engage in works of mercy for people in need. There is in many places a spirit of “brotherly love” among the people of the world.

Interestingly enough, Satan will participate in the use of admirable qualities. He will—if it suits his ultimate purpose. If Satan concludes he can keep someone from the kingdom of God by encouraging that person to *reform*, he will participate in the natural virtues of that person. He will participate in the natural virtues of marriage partners, attempting to keep them from being filled with the Holy Spirit.

It seems paradoxical that natural virtues may be bad for a marriage. In counseling with young couples about their need for the love of God in their marriages at times we have sensed their utter disbelief. They feel they are “so

much in love” with each other they will never have need for divine love. It is a terrible mistake on their part.

When a husband thinks he can make his marriage complete with the love *he* is able to produce, he has placed his marriage in jeopardy. The wife who feels she is such a “good wife” that she is just what her husband needs—that she can do it without God—has made a gross miscalculation. She will never experience the sweet spirit of submissiveness necessary for her marriage to reach a “top-level performance” spiritually.

In this section we have worked under the title, *Gracefulness is Prevented by Clumsiness*. A lack of spiritual coordination between the head and the body—between the husband and wife—is due to spiritual awkwardness.

Why all of this clumsiness? It is the result of the influence of our threefold enemy: the flesh, the devil and the world. These three combine to make us lose our coordination in marriage, and the marital relationship becomes excruciatingly awkward.

The clumsiness is expressed through all of the *surface symptoms* we have suggested. Now we look to find the victory over such marital clumsiness.

It comes by God’s grace.

REVIEW THE CHAPTER

Fill in the Blanks

Cain-like qualities; the flesh, the devil, and the world, that work in our lives are:

_____, _____, _____
_____, _____, _____, _____
_____, _____.

FOR MEDITATION

Which of the Cain-like qualities mentioned in this chapter may have been a negative factor in your marriage? In what ways have you been guilty? In what ways has your spouse been guilty?

EXERCISES

1. In what ways can irresponsibility be harmful to a marriage?

2. Which of the distractions to marital bliss discussed in this chapter do you believe creates the most marital problems—and why?

part three

Gracefulness Realized

We have come to the “heart and soul” of this work. In Part One we discussed the basic essentials for gracefulness within the marital body. In Part Two we presented the hindrances to marital gracefulness.

Here in Part Three, under the theme of *Gracefulness Realized*, our intention is to set forth the “how” of it all.

We may hunger and thirst for gracefulness in our marriages, but if we do not know *how* it may be ours we may live in the grip of despair and frustration.

It is important to remember that marital coordination is possible *only when both husband and wife understand and live out of their oneness with Christ*.

We will present the New Testament concept of oneness with Christ and how to live out of that oneness. We shall also explain the two important results of such living: (1) the powers of the flesh, the devil and the world (and the Cain-like qualities they produce in us) are broken; and (2) we shall possess the “divine dynamic” for submissiveness and love.

We must “lay hold” on these “grace” truths. When we do, and apply them to our marriages, we shall surely enjoy *abounding gracefulness* in our marital relationships.

chapter seven

Gracefulness Realized By The Absence of Clumsiness

“A threefold cord is not easily broken.”

This statement from Ecclesiastes indicates the difficulty of breaking a threefold cord; however, the writer does not claim it is impossible. God can do anything.

The threefold cord to which we refer is the hidden opposition to our marriages—the flesh, the devil and the world. This threefold evil alliance can be broken by the power of God.

The shattering of this deadly alliance is a work of God’s grace. It becomes personally effective within our lives only when we come to the understanding of—and experience of—our oneness with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Such understanding and experience moves God into every corner of need in our lives—including our marriages.

The Absence of Clumsiness Through Understanding Our Oneness With Christ

In a paraphrase of First Corinthians 6:17, the Living Bible captures the essence of our oneness with Christ. Paul writes:

*If you give yourself to the Lord, you and Christ are joined together
as one person. First Cor. 6:17 TLB*

The theme of the “Indwelling Christ” is our starting point in sharing our oneness with the Lord.

The Apostle Paul asserts that our hope of glory is Christ “*in us.*” Paul informs in Romans 8:9 if we do not have the Spirit of Christ we are not Christians.

We will not even begin to understand oneness with Christ, however, if we grasp only that He lives “in us.” We must understand also that we are “in Christ.” These are not just expressions which indicate we are saved; they describe our oneness with Christ—Jesus Christ is actually in us and we are actually in Him.

Furthermore, Jesus will never live through us as He desires until we understand and experience what it means for us to be “in Him.”

The New Testament explains what it means to be “in Christ” by first showing that we were born “in Adam” and what it means for us to be “in Adam.” We are in Adam by virtue of his being the head of the natural race of men, and of our being born into that race.

The Apostle Paul insists that Adam is responsible for infecting all those born into his race with both a sin problem and a death problem. In Romans 5:12 Paul writes:

... through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men ...

When Adam infected *himself* with a sin problem and a death problem, he infected the *entire human race* with both problems.

First Corinthians 15:49 refers to our earthly and resurrected bodies.

And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.

When God created Adam with two eyes and two ears, for all practical purposes, at the same time, He gave *us* two eyes and two ears—not because we were there, but because Adam was the head of the human race.

In the same manner Adam passed on a sin problem and a death problem to all those who have been born into his race.

Following Paul’s explanation that we are infected with a sin problem and a death problem because we are in Adam’s race, he writes:

... Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. Rom. 5:14

We can think of “type” as a picture. As a picture is a likeness, Adam is a likeness of Jesus. The fact that Adam, the first person in the human race, infected his entire race with the same sin and death problems with which he had infected himself tells us something about Jesus.

The message is clear. Jesus is the head of a race and certain things that are true of Him become true of every person who enters His race. *It is understanding and living out this revelation of Jesus that opens the door for victory in the Christian life and opens the door for a marriage of the highest quality.*

One of the most important things you can do to lay the foundation for your marriage is to memorize the following:

Adam is the head of the natural race. Therefore, the moment we entered his race, things true of him became true of us. Jesus is the head of the spiritual race. Therefore, the moment we entered His race, things true of Him became true of us.

Romans 6:3a inform us of our entrance into the race of Jesus through a baptism.

Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus ...

Clearly, this could not refer to baptism in water. Paul explains this as a baptism into Jesus by the Holy Spirit in First Corinthians 12:12-13a.

For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body ...

Three things became true of us when we received Jesus and were baptized into Him by the Holy Spirit. We were crucified, buried and resurrected.

Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death ... For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection. Rom. 6:3-5

Believers do not need to be crucified. We have been crucified from the moment we received Jesus as Lord and Savior. We need to experience our crucifixion—and our burial and resurrection. And the Scriptures tell us how we may do so. But first we must understand more about our crucifixion, burial and resurrection.

Scripture reveals four features to our crucifixion. We are dead to sin (Rom. 6:2, 11), our old man is crucified (Rom. 6:6), we are dead to the law (Rom. 7:4), and we are crucified to the world (Gal. 6:14).

To be dead to sin means that as far as our sin nature is concerned we are dead and cannot respond to it. According to Romans 1:22 our sin nature is that *we think we are*

wise. Since we are dead to our own wisdom, we are free to live out of the wisdom of God.

Our old man has been crucified. Our old man is our underlying sin nature—we think we are wise—and all it has produced in us. That part of us has been crucified.

We are dead to the law. This means that we no longer live by rules—even the rules of the ten commandments. This frees us to live as the brides of Christ. As such, we live under His direction and in His strength. Romans 7:4 says:

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 God.

According to Galatians 6:14, we are crucified to the world. The world is that throng of people not living under the leadership of the Holy Spirit—whether Christians or non-Christians. We are crucified to those people and their influence on our lives.

Our burial means that our old man who is crucified has been buried away. Our burial is a second lock on the door. It gives a double victory to the crucifixion of our old man. Our burial also was preparation for our spiritual resurrection.

Our resurrection has three features. They are listed in Ephesians 2:4-6.

God ... even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus ...

In our resurrection we *first* were made alive. Christ came to live in us in the person of the Holy Spirit. *Second*, we were raised up. Romans 6:4 says that we were raised from the dead. This revelation indicates that in our being raised up God took us out of the spiritually dead ones of the world. *Third*, we were made to sit together in heavenly places. The Book of Hebrews talks about our being in the heavenly Holy of Holies.

When husbands and wives experience what is already true of them, theirs will be a blissful marriage. It will be a model marriage.

The Absence of Clumsiness Through Experiencing Our Oneness With Christ

We experience our crucifixion, burial and resurrection by obeying the five commands listed in Romans 6:11-13. Before looking at the passage, though, consider the following:

There are things true of us in the Christian life that we will not experience until we believe they are true of us and choose to experience them.

It would help to memorize the statement even though it is not a Scripture.

Now examine the passage. It consists of five commands that are to be obeyed throughout each day.

Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. Rom. 6:11-13

The first command is to believe something. The second and third are commands to choose to do something. The fourth is a command both to choose to do something and to believe something. The fifth is a command to choose to do something.

The word “reckon” in the first command is best understood as “believe.” To be dead to sin is to be dead as far as your sin nature—your “know-it-all attitude” —is concerned. You do not have to respond to your own point of view, but you are free to live out of God’s point of view. *Believe that.* To believe that you are alive to God is to *believe* you are seated with Christ in heaven.

The second command is to choose not to respond to your own point of view but to continue to respond to God’s point of view.

The third command is to refuse to give any part of your body to your own point of view.

The fourth command is to give yourself to God as one who is crucified, buried and resurrected.

The fifth command is to give the parts of your body to God that He might use them to express His righteousness.

And now we can show how experiencing our oneness with Christ in crucifixion, burial and resurrection frees us from marital clumsiness.

The Absence of Clumsiness Through Victory Over the Flesh

When we obey the five commands, we experience the crucifixion of the flesh. We have already seen that our flesh is our sin problem and is the root problem of our old man. So, when we experience the crucifixion and burial of our old man, we experience the crucifixion and burial of the flesh. Furthermore in Galatians 5:24 the Apostle Paul writes the following:

And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

We crucified our flesh when we gave our lives to the Lord. We experience that cru-

cifixion when we live out the five imperatives of Romans 6:11-13. In addition to the Cain-like causes of clumsiness we have mentioned there are several passages in the New Testament indicating other things the flesh produces in us. Read the most prominent one.

Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like ... Gal. 5:19-21a

We can easily see how freedom from the flesh and all it produces in us takes away much of the clumsiness of the marriage relationship.

The Absence of Clumsiness Through Victory Over Satan

Satan is a liar and murderer. Satan has death on his mind. He has destruction on his mind. He delights in disturbing and destroying Christian marriages. But when we experience our union with Christ in crucifixion, burial and resurrection, we free ourselves from much of the cause of clumsiness in our marriage relationship that Satan causes.

Consider the following passage dealing with our victory over Satan—found in Ephesians 1:16-23. Paul says he does:

... not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know ... the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

Paul’s prayer is that his readers may know that when they live by faith, they can experience being seated with Christ in heaven far above Satan and all his kingdom.

In addition to that victory over Satan add the following revelation of Satan provided by the author of the Book of Hebrews:

Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil. Heb. 2:14

Translate “destroy” as “put out of power.”

There is yet more to our victory over Satan. Read the following promise of Jesus:

*... if you say to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’
it will be done. Matt. 21:21b*

From our position of enthronement far above our dethroned enemy we can speak to this opposition to our marriages and remove this agent of marital clumsiness.

Freedom From Clumsiness Through Victory Over the World

We likely have more of the world in us than we realize. Possibly, we have modeled our lives after the best Christian we know—who may have modeled for us features of worldliness.

*A good way to know if we have in us ways of the world is
to compare the teachings of God’s word with the philoso-
phies for life that are guiding us. If we find conflict, we
have found ways of worldliness within us.*

It could be that you do not even need to research the Bible to know of worldly ways in your daily life. You know they are there and there seems to be nothing you can do about them. There is something you can do. First, read Galatians 6:14.

*But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus
Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.*

Obey the five commands for experiencing your crucifixion, burial and resurrection and you will begin to experience your crucifixion to the world.

As you experience your crucifixion to the world, you will also be experiencing freedom from Cain-like and other surface causes of clumsiness in your marriage.

REVIEW THE CHAPTER**True or False**

1. The concept of Christ in us will never have its full impact on our daily living apart from our understanding and living out of our being "in Him." _____
2. The New Testament explains what it means to be "in Christ" by first showing that we were born "in Adam" and what it means for us to be "in Adam." _____

Fill in the Blanks

1. The three things that became true of us when we were baptized into Jesus are: _____, _____ and _____.
2. The four features of our crucifixion are: _____, _____, _____, _____.
2. The two features of our burial are: _____ and _____.
3. The three features of our resurrection are: _____, _____ and _____.

FOR MEDITATION

1. Memorize and seek to understand the five commands for experiencing your crucifixion, burial and resurrection.
2. Ask yourself if you have ever obeyed any of these commands the way this chapter explains them. Ask yourself if you have every obeyed all of these commands the way the chapter explains them.
3. Consider meditation on this chapter until you know you have begun obeying all of the five commands for experiencing your crucifixion, burial and resurrection.
4. Think of changes experiencing union with Christ bring to your marriage.

EXERCISES

1. Express in your own words the meaning of the biblical statement that Adam is “the figure” of Christ.

2. Why does believing that you have been crucified affect your relationship to your spouse?

3. Why does believing that you have been resurrected affect your relationship with your spouse?

chapter eight

Gracefulness Realized By The Presence Of An Inner Dynamic

Marital clumsiness is the inevitable result of the works produced by the flesh, the devil and the world. We have seen how these cancerous intruders may be kept out of power through experiencing our union with Christ. We are progressively liberated from them as we understand and continuously live out of our oneness with the Lord.

Spiritual gracefulness, however, is not developed simply by the absence of clumsiness—it is realized through the presence of a “divine dynamic” within.

Is such a spiritual dynamic available?

It is!

It also is ours through our union with Jesus Christ. It is the power necessary to make our marriages “graceful bodies.”

The necessary dynamic is the life of the “indwelling Christ” breaking out through our lives—it is Spirit-filled living—it is “walking in the Spirit.”

It is of utmost importance that we understand experiencing the Spirit-filled life is not the “difficult and agonizing” matter some have made it out to be.

Being a Spirit-filled Christian is not something we *achieve*.

The Spirit-filled life is as much a gift from God as our salvation—and we know unquestionably that salvation is a free gift. Our intention is to point out the “simple” steps to Spirit-filled living.

Our Lord made an interesting, informative statement to the woman at the well. “The water that I give you shall be in you a well of water springing up into eternal life” (John 4:14).

Following a message I had preached from this verse, a member of our church rushed up to me excitedly asking, “Do you know anything about a spring of water?” Without giving me time to answer he continued, “You can’t dam it up! That’s right! You try to dam it up and it will break out somewhere else.”

God taught me something through that conversation. Jesus was telling the woman that the Holy Spirit will continue to exert pressure to fill us. That is exactly what is happening to every Christian at this very moment.

From the moment you accepted Christ as Lord and Savior the Holy Spirit has been fiercely seeking to fill you with Himself.

Possibly you have prayed many times for the filling of the Holy Spirit as though you believed God is reluctant to give you the filling. *He is not.* God is constantly putting pressure within our hearts to give us the filling of the Holy Spirit. Our very desire for this filling is actually *God’s* desire for us to have it.

Why then are countless numbers of true Christians without the filling of the Holy Spirit?

A major answer is found in Galatians 5:17:

The flesh lusteth against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh.

If you love the Lord dearly and are not now a Spirit-filled person, it is because of the opposition of the flesh. When God-loving believers remove the power of the flesh they will be Spirit-filled.

Visualize the following: you have in front of you a metal box. There is attached to one end of the box a water hose turned on to full force. Attached to the opposite end is an air hose, also turned to full force of equal pressure.

The metal box—under these circumstances—cannot be filled with water *or* air. If you want the box filled with water you must turn off the pressure of the air. When we remove the pressure (the opposition) of the air, the box will automatically fill with water.

Do you grasp the illustration? When we remove the pressure of the flesh, we will automatically, *immediately* become filled with the Holy Spirit.

But how do we remove the pressure of the flesh?

We remove the pressure of the flesh and receive the filling of the Holy Spirit by experiencing our crucifixion, burial and resurrection. We experience the filling of the Holy Spirit when we obey the five commands of Romans 6:11-13.

We continue to experience the filling of the Holy Spirit as we continue throughout each day to obey the five commands.

As you begin the Spirit-filled life you may experience *nothing*—that is, nothing *outward*. It is imperative though for you to continue in the process you have begun. God is working *inward* changes. In time, changes will begin to take place in your outer life.

The New Testament teaches the Christian life is one of growth. We do not arrive at Christian maturity in a day, or in a week. It is of paramount importance that we continue to grow daily in our Christian lives.

There should be a warning at this juncture. Most people who enter into the life of walking in the Spirit have a beautiful beginning for a few weeks or even longer, then seem to revert back to the life they had previous to their walking in the Spirit.

This filling of the first few weeks seems to be a sovereign work of God, permitting us to experience in a convincing way the kind of life which may be ours if we continue to walk in the Spirit. Then we settle back into a life which calls for daily growth. Both the sovereign experience and the growth period develop our faith in God.

We may begin the growth period by being filled for only four or five minutes a day; however, we will be able to see progress in just a short time. You can well imagine the growth over a period of months if you grow daily.

So do not be alarmed if you enter into a “life of ecstasy” for a brief time, then seem to lose it. This is normal. Do not allow Satan to discourage you from continuing in the Spirit even if you seem to have a “spiritual relapse.”

When we begin walking in the Spirit we are entering a life of “starting over again.” Time and again we will come to the realization that we are living out of our own thoughts and plans, not His. When this happens, we start over again: we wilfully and consciously obey the five imperatives of Romans 6:11-13.

The Holy Spirit will make your marriage a *graceful body*. He will bring about a beautiful coordination.

Once again, the husband’s responsibility toward marital coordination is that of divine love toward his wife. Galatians 5:22 indicates a fruit of the Spirit is love. The husband will find that one of the obvious results of his being Spirit-filled is a greater capacity to love his wife—and to express that divine love to her.

The Scripture is even more pointed concerning the Spirit-filled wife and her submission to her husband. This entire work is based on Ephesians 5:22-33. Just a few sentences before the passage begins, we are commanded to be filled with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18). A close study of these verses in the Greek text clearly indicates that submissiveness on the wife’s part is the “natural” result of her being filled with the Spirit.

The husband’s responsibility of divine love and the wife’s responsibility in submissiveness are both realized when each one continues to be a Spirit-filled believer. Beautiful coordination is the spiritual result. The wife serves as the body under the head; the head controls and gives life to the body in tender love.

No other human relationship can compare to this.

This section of the work is titled “Gracefulness Realized.” May every husband and wife be set free from the flesh, the devil and the world, and be filled with the Holy Spirit—having “gracefulness realized” in their marriages.

REVIEW THE CHAPTER

True or False

1. Experiencing the Spirit-filled life is not the “difficult and agonizing” matter some have made it out to be. _____
2. The Holy Spirit occasionally prompts us to receive His filling of our lives. _____
3. We are filled with the Holy Spirit by removing the opposition of our flesh. _____

Fill in the Blanks

Spiritual gracefulness . . . is not developed simply by the absence of clumsiness—it is _____.

FOR MEDITATION

1. Meditate on the statements of this chapter on how to be filled with the Holy Spirit then ask yourself if you have ever sought the filling of the Holy Spirit in this manner. If you have not, try it.
2. One filling with the Holy Spirit is not enough. We must continue to be filled with the Holy Spirit throughout each day.

EXERCISES

1. Why does the author of the book say that being filled with the Holy Spirit is not the “difficult and agonizing” thing some have made it out to be?

2. Discuss how being filled with the Holy Spirit enables each spouse to contribute to the coordination of the marital relationship.

part four

Gracefulness At Peak Level

“We haven’t reached our stride just yet.”

“We’re not really playing up to our potential.”

These statements are often heard from athletes and coaches, indicating their teams have not yet reached their peak.

When athletic teams are playing at peak level, they usually describe themselves as being “on a roll.” A baseball pitcher recounts his best performances with the explanation, “I’ve found a groove,” or “I’ve found my *rhythm*.”

Such peak level performances are not achieved casually; no individual or team simply “drifts” into a championship caliber of play. A determined commitment precedes such physical dexterity—plus a constant attention to coordination.

This is what brings an athletic team to peak level performance!

Marriages are the same.

Perfect coordination between head and body produces a peak level performance in the marital relationship. Both the husband and wife must employ the same depth of commitment to excellence—empowered by the Holy Spirit—which is demanded of successful athletes.

This “gracefulness at peak level” is the natural result of ...

... divine love ... total submissiveness.

chapter nine

The Husband Ministering To His Wife's Spiritual Needs

The foundational passage for this work is Ephesians 5:22-33. We now look to the passage for some pertinent applications concerning the husband's leadership role.

The husband is to be the responsible head of the wife by following the example of the Lord Jesus Christ in His role as Head of His bride—the church. The passage describes how Christ functions as Head of the church and how a Christian husband is to function in the very same manner toward the “bride of his youth.”

The passage reads:

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies ... Eph. 5:25-28a

Note the beginning and closing words: “Husbands, love your wives *even as Christ loved the church*, and gave himself for it ... *So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies*” (author's italics).

Clearly, Paul is saying what Christ does for the church, husbands should do for their wives.

A note of special import should be stressed here. Paul implores the husband to love his wife as Christ loved the church; he then indicates a man should love his wife as his own body—because she is his body. As the church is the body of Christ, *the wife is the husband's body*.

Paul is not teaching the wife’s *body* is the husband’s body. He is affirming that the wife, the total person—body, soul, spirit—is the husband’s body (in the spiritual sense).

The passage presents to us a glorious scene in which Christ presents to Himself His redeemed and sanctified bride in purity, holiness and glory. The scene is *breath-taking*, and it also serves as an example of what the husband is to do for his wife.

The husband should follow the example of the Lord. The passage informs us of what Christ *desires* and *does* for the church.

A Husband Performs at Peak Level as the Head of His Wife When He “Desires” for Her What Christ Desires for the Church

The husband who is filled with divine love for his wife desires for her what Christ desires for His church. Our passage informs us of what those desires are.

The loving husband desires to present his wife to the Lord and to himself in purity, holiness and glory. The thought of one human being presenting another human in purity, holiness and glory may seem too lofty for some; however, Paul insists he preached, warned, taught the Colossians in order that *he might present them* as “perfect” in Christ Jesus (Col. 1:28). The same Greek verb for “present” is employed in both the Colossians verse and in our Ephesians passage.

*What Christ desires for the church, the loving husband
desires for his wife.*

The loving husband desires to present his wife as spotless

The loving husband desires to present his wife to the Lord and to himself without spot or wrinkle or blemish.

We shall gain a more graphic perception of Paul’s statement in verse 27 if we allow ourselves the experience of this imaginary scene. *We are with a bridegroom on the day of his wedding. It is his responsibility to pick up and deliver his bride’s wedding gown. Upon delivery he discovers that through someone’s carelessness there are spots, blemishes and wrinkles on many areas of the beautiful, expensive garment.*

What is his reaction? Anger? Disappointment? Fear?

For whom is he concerned? *For his bride!* He may have fleeting thoughts of disappointment for himself, but his greatest concern—overwhelmingly so—is for his bride.

This picture of the spots is evoked by our Ephesians passage. Because she is a part of Adam’s race, every wife has *spots, wrinkles, blemishes*—in both her character and personality. According to Paul, these are to be the burden of her loving husband. The husband must have genuine concern for these needs in his wife.

Though every person is different, and the particular “blemishes” in one person will not be the same as in another, the basic sin problem in everyone is the same—the knowledge of good and evil, the “know-it-all attitude.” While every husband must concern himself with all the spots and blemishes of his bride, he must above all, give attention to this spot.

We are acutely aware that the husband must express his concern and solution to his wife from the position of his own victorious life—and with loving concern, not with lashing criticism.

As we have seen in the section on “gracefulness realized,” victory for both husband and wife will come only through understanding and living out of union with Jesus Christ. Therefore, the loving husband’s desires are for his wife to live out of her union with Christ.

He desires to present her to the Lord and to himself as “spotless.”

This is the hope of a husband filled with divine love.

The loving husband desires to present his wife as holy

This is quite a challenge to a mere human husband—to present his wife to the Lord and to himself as holy; however, by the grace of our Lord there is strength to go forth in faith that he can do so.

The word “holy” has a dual aspect to it. One is the concept of *purity*. Husbands are to seek the development of purity in their wives—moral and spiritual. The purpose of assisting her in removing the spots and wrinkles is that she may be pure in every way.

The most basic meaning of the word “holy” is that of separation. Our passage teaches the wife is to be separated unto her husband, but the highest concept Paul has in mind is that the husband lead his wife to be completely separated unto the Lord—totally available unto Christ!

The responsibility of such a grand commandment rests on the husband.

Again, we can become totally available to the Lord only by understanding and living out of our union with Christ. Ultimately, therefore, the loving husband leads his wife to grasp and live out of her union with Jesus Christ. Holiness follows!

The loving husband desires to present his wife as glorious

Just as Christ presents the church to Himself as glorious, the loving husband desires

to present his wife to the Lord and to himself as a glorious wife. The glory with which the wife is presented is nothing less than the glory of the Lord Himself.

One of the great passages concerning the glory of the Lord is found in the book of Exodus, where God responds to Moses’ request to see His glory.

And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children’s children, unto the third and fourth generation. Ex. 34:6-7

Note once more what God does and says in this situation is in response to Moses’ prayer to see His glory. What God *does* and *says* is His way of allowing Moses to sense and grasp His glory.

There are three facets to His glory which God reveals in the pronouncement to Moses.

God’s glory is His *love*. In the passage from Exodus we read the words *merciful, gracious, longsuffering, goodness, forgiving*. These five words may be summed up in just one word: love. *God’s glory is His love*.

God’s glory is His *truth*. The word truth means just that—”truth.” This is more than containment of a body of truth. It connotes honesty, integrity. It also has the concept of “faithfulness, dependability.” We can trust our Lord to be true to His promises. His glory is His truth.

God’s glory is seen in His *righteousness*. God’s righteousness is His love *and His hatred of sin*. The word righteousness is used often in the New Testament with both the meaning of God’s love and His judgment on sin. His judgment on sin is clearly indicated in His statement to Moses that He judges sin.

God revealed to Moses that His glory is His *love*, His *truth* and His *righteousness*.

There are two other biblical expressions which convey the glory of God: power and bright shining.

God’s glory is His *power*. In Romans 6:4 the resurrection of Christ is attributed to God’s glory. The resurrection *power* is God’s glory. God’s glory is power.

God’s glory is *bright shining*. On the night of Christ’s birth the glory of the Lord shone round about the shepherds, a bright shining.

His glory is expressed in love, truth, righteousness, power and bright shining. The husband is to present his wife as glorious—these five features of God’s glory the husband desires to be expressed in the life of the wife.

Note that each of the features of God’s glory is altogether a work of the Holy Spirit: love (Gal. 5:22), truth (John 14:17), righteousness (John 16:8-11), power (Rom. 1:4, 6:4), bright shining (2 Cor. 3:13, 18). These features of glory are the work of the Holy Spirit, and we can live continuously filled with the Spirit only as we understand and live out of union with Christ.

As we interpret Ephesians five, is the passage asking too much from the husband? Is he capable of presenting his wife to the Lord as glorious, spotless and holy?

Paul strongly asserts he is able to do it.

We shall now look at our Lord as the example of “how” to do it.

The Loving Husband Performs at Peak Level by “Doing” for His Wife What Christ Does for the Church

In verses 25-28, Paul shares the example of Christ as He presents the church to Himself in spotlessness, holiness and glory. He informs us that the Lord Jesus does these things for the church in two ways: by His giving of Himself; by His spoken word. He is the great example for the husband. We shall look at these two means utilized by our Lord—seeing how the husband may employ them as he ministers to his wife.

By his giving of himself

The husband must approach his wife from the position of his own victory. If he desires his wife to be spotless, holy and full of glory, he must *himself* be moving in the direction of being spotless, holy and filled with glory. Repeatedly, we have pointed out these qualities are experienced only by those who understand and live out of their union with Christ—a growing process.

In order to present the church to Himself as spotless, pure and glorious, Christ “gave Himself up” to the cross (verse 25). The husband must give himself up as Christ did—the husband must go to the cross. He must experience his crucifixion.

Our Lord’s crucifixion alone would not accomplish what He is doing for His bride today. When He gave Himself up, His burial and resurrection and followed.

The same is true of the husband. When he lives out his union with Christ by obeying the five commands of Romans 6:11-13, he experiences crucifixion, burial, resurrection and enthronement.

(If you are reading this present section and have not read the preceding one, you may think we are here involved in some type of heresy. The section on *Gracefulness Realized* is absolutely essential for an understanding of what we are presenting here.)

It is only as we *experience* the crucified, buried and resurrected life that we are freed from our Cain-like features and are filled with the Holy Spirit. And husbands who enjoy such freedom and filling are able to face their wives and their needs with the spirit of divine love...

... and not with a human spirit of criticism and impatience.

When a husband is filled with the Holy Spirit he is able to understand why his wife possesses some of the flaws she retains. He is enabled by the Holy Spirit to know “when” and “how” to talk with his wife about needed changes.

When he experiences his crucifixion, burial and resurrection, he will have credibility with his wife in helping her change and grow in Christ. He must approach her from the position of his own victory.

The Lord Jesus does His work of grace in the church today from His enthroned position. The husband who will aid his wife in making spiritual progress will be more effective while experiencing the enthroned life in the heavenlies.

There are several reasons this is true.

First, from the position of enthronement the husband possesses a greater faith to speak to the “mountains of opposition” which hinder his wife. The forces of Satan and the flesh will “give ground” when the husband speaks to them in faith from the enthroned position of life in the heavenlies.

Second, only from the enthroned position will the husband’s prayer life reach its highest elevation—his praying at its best. This will be reality as he prays from the heavenlies, where the Holy Spirit has greater access to the husband’s mind as He (the Spirit) leads him to pray.

Third, the husband’s example to his wife is strengthened from the enthroned position. The “glory” of which we have written comes to those who are in the enthroned position. The husband who fails to experience the glory of God in his own life will find it difficult to present his wife as a glorious person.

The glory of the heavenlies is beautiful in its explanation. Remember that Moses’ face shone with glory when he experienced the presence of the Lord? Moses’ glory faded. The glory we have from being enthroned is not only permanent, it increases. And it is the very glory of the Lord Jesus Himself. (2 Cor. 3:13, 18). We are changed from “glory to glory” as we behold the glory of the Lord which is “in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6).

Any Christian may have *fleeting* experiences such as those described by Paul, but only those who experience life in the heavenlies will know such glory as a *continuous* way of life.

The husband who possesses such glory will be a wonderful, encouraging example to his wife. Enthroned living will strengthen his faith, elevate his prayer life and reflect the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The husband who follows the example of Christ by “giving up himself” greatly enhances his position as head of his wife. This means he has *reckoned* himself dead unto sin and alive unto God; it also means he has *chosen* to be dead to sin and alive to God with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ as a part of his own daily life.

Jesus gave of Himself.

So must the husband.

By his spoken word

The second means our Lord employs to make his church spotless, holy and glorious is the washing of the water by the word (verse 26). The “word” to which Paul refers, means “*spoken word.*” *Christ communicates* to the Christian, to the church.

Most believers have experienced that “spoken word” from the Lord. We do not mean to imply we have heard it audibly, but we have experienced it as indelibly as if it came to us in audible form—a word from our Lord! It may have come when reading Scripture and a verse “became alive” for us. It became *our* verse. It may have been the inner urging of the Lord for us to do a certain thing, and we had no peace about the matter until we did it—a word from Him. We have followed His prompting and have been blessed because of it—a definitive word from the Lord. These are some of the “spoken words” of the Lord; in fact, He is speaking to us all of the time.

Husbands are to follow this example of the Lord. A spoken word to the wife is a wonderful instrument for presenting her to the Lord as spotless, holy and glorious. A word “fitly spoken” by her husband—in gentleness and love—is a direct way to encounter the wife concerning her walk with Christ. Some practical applications will serve to illustrate how this works.

First, a word of “timely” exhortation by the husband is at times necessary. The spoken word is the most effective weapon to use to point out a spiritual “flaw” in the wife. Please mark this: it is *only* as the husband lives out his union with Christ that he will be able to speak to his wife of such matters. Otherwise, he will appear to her as judgmental or “holier than thou.”

When, however, his mind is under control of the Holy Spirit, he will speak to her with softness, with divine love, with a caring attitude—and he will be effective.

The word “timely” is important. The husband controlled by the Spirit will speak to his wife at just the right time, under the correct set of circumstances. God’s timing is always right.

Second, a word of “timely explanation” is one of the husband’s chief responsibilities in bringing his wife to flawlessness, holiness and glory. We are here referring to explanation of God’s truth from Scripture. Above all else he is to show her that she is one with Jesus Christ.

The wife must learn all it means to be in union with Christ; because in Christ there is increasing glory and holiness and freedom from every spot, wrinkle and blemish.

The wife must be encouraged by her husband to *experience* in daily life her crucifixion, burial, and resurrection.

The responsibility for this spiritual development of the wife rests squarely upon the husband. Because he is the head and she is the body, he must—out of his own victory in Christ—seek to present her to the Lord spotless, glorious and holy.

With the victorious husband leading the way, the marriage has tremendous opportunity for peak level performance.

REVIEW THE CHAPTER

True or False

- 1. The husband who is filled with divine love for his wife desires for her what Christ desires for His church. _____
- 2. The husband can present his wife spotless, holy and filled with glory without being concerned about being spotless, holy and full of glory himself. _____

Fill in the Blanks

- 1. Therefore, the husbands’s desires for his wife are _____
_____.
- 2. The loving husband performs at peak level by doing for his wife what Christ does for the church by _____ and by _____.

FOR MEDITATION

- 1. The husband must approach his wife from the position of his own victory. If he desires his wife to be spotless, holy and full of glory, he must *himself* be moving in the direction of being spotless, holy and filled with glory.
- 2. With the victorious husband leading the way, the marriage has tremendous opportunity for peak level performance.

EXERCISES

- 1. What are your thoughts about the statement that the spots, wrinkles, and blemishes in his wife are the burden of her husband?

- 2. How does the husband go about presenting his wife as “holy?”

- 3. Discuss the author’s statement “a word of timely explanation is one of the husband’s chief responsibilities in bringing his wife to flawlessness, holiness and glory.”

chapter ten

The Husband Ministering To His Wife's Emotional Needs

The husband is to minister to his wife's emotional needs.

Emotional and spiritual needs are in one sense the same and in other ways quite dissimilar. We are separating them into different areas for discussion. In the preceding chapter we viewed Paul's "command" for husbands to minister to the spiritual needs of their wives, so they could be presented as spotless, holy and in glow to the Lord.

Now we give attention to the emotional needs of the wife. There are two thoughts in our passage which magnify the husband's role as "comforter."

Paul speaks of the husband nourishing and cherishing the wife. Nourishment primarily has to do with food; the word translated as "cherish" basically means "to warm." Paul has in mind the wife's *emotional comfort*—expressed through the husband loving his wife as he loves his own physical body.

Paul then indicates the husband's comforting of his wife by leaving his father and mother.

The New Testament refers to the Holy Spirit as "Comforter." The husband, then, who seeks to be the comforter God has called him to be will live out his union with Christ and receive the filling of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God living through him will bring great comfort to the wife.

The Husband is to Love His Wife as He Loves His Own Physical Flesh

It is quite interesting once again to note that Paul guides the husband to establish his leadership role—not with authoritative high-handedness, but with expressions of considerate, divine love toward his wife. Never does he even hint for husbands to enforce submission. Read Ephesians 5:28-29.

So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies, For no man ever hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord [does] the church ... (author’s brackets).

As the Spirit-filled husband cares for his own physical body, *nourishing* it and *cherishing* it, he will care for his wife (his spiritual body) in the same way, nourishing and cherishing her.

One of the emotional perspectives the husband has in comforting his wife is placing her in the “right atmosphere” for growth and training. No child, for example, will grow properly who is not placed in a growth environment.

The Spirit-filled husband who is the “*mood* setter” in the home will provide the “right atmosphere.”

A husband who is satisfied to spend every evening watching television is not providing the atmosphere his wife needs; if he takes his wife to social gatherings that are not Christ-honoring she will be robbed of the setting for nourishment. Many men, while serving the Lord, have neglected the emotional security of their wives.

Every family faces seasons of tragedy and stress; at such times there is great need of comfort. It is a thing of spiritual beauty when the Spirit-filled husband brings that emotional comfort to his wife.

Most wives, however, are in need of comfort on a day to day basis—even when there are no crushing blows of stress and tragedy. No man will be able to comfort his wife unless he is in communication with her. Husbands and wives must talk! They must open their hearts to one another. The Spirit-filled husband is ready to communicate.

When a wife reveals some deep need to her husband the Spirit-filled husband is the Holy Spirit’s instrument in bringing calm and peace to her.

Every husband should be acutely aware that *most women find it extremely difficult to have a good image of themselves*. They need a “spoken word” from their husbands, and they need it often!

The word “comforter” referring to the Holy Spirit has in it the idea of encourager. The Spirit-filled husband is an encourager to his wife. He will tell his wife how vitally important she is to him, and to the kingdom of God.

This comfort from the husband has many avenues of expression. The “avenues of expression,” however, are incidental when compared to the attitude of the husband. The paramount aspect of this nourishing, cherishing, comforting is that the husband *loves-nourishes-cherishes* her as he does his own body. When he does, she will realize it. That in itself will bring great emotional comfort to his wife.

Whatever her need, the Spirit-filled husband will be the comforter of his wife.

Emotional security!

**The Husband is to Love His Wife Enough to
Break Parental Emotional Ties Which Hamper
His Being “Joined” to His Wife**

Paul addresses this second vital principle by which the husband ministers emotional security to his wife. Paul stated it as follows:

*For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be
joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. Eph. 5:31*

This statement of Paul’s touches a “hot nerve” in many marriages. The nerve is inflamed because some husbands are unable to make an emotional break from their parents. This can be the source of intense distress—even *seemingly* irreparable harm—in some relationships.

The phrase “for this cause” which begins the 31st verse seems to be related to the fact that the husband is the head of the wife. In his leadership role he is to leave his parents and be joined unto his wife.

The husband leaving his parents

The leaving of his parents implies breaking “emotional ties.” He is a family leader and he must establish his own leadership. A wise counselor told us many years ago, “When you marry, move 1,000 miles away from your parents and relatives, *emotionally*. If you cannot move away from them emotionally, then move 1,000 miles away from them *physically*. Paul is writing in the same ilk. The husband is not to break *all* ties with his parents, but he is to sever those which hamper his being properly joined to his wife.

Though he is never to dishonor his parents, he is to make his wife (in terms of human relationships) *number one* in his life.

Note that the Apostle Paul addresses this admonition only to the husbands. There is reason for this. The husband is the one who has the most difficulty breaking away from his parents, especially his mother.

It is true due to the nature of the mother-son relationship. Usually, it is his *mother* who has looked after his every need for most of his unmarried life—cooking his meals, washing his clothes. This same mother, particularly if she is not a mature Christian, may find it difficult to give up her son to another woman who will be cooking his meals as she has done. This can place many hindrances in the marital path of an “appreciative” son.

A husband who is having difficulty in this area should remember two things.

First, he is probably impairing his marriage. This can be the cause of deep-seated resentment on the part of the wife. She can be robbed of the emotional security she has a right to expect from her husband.

Second, he must realize all of the spiritual help he needs is available to him as he experiences his union with Christ in crucifixion, burial and resurrection. In doing so he will experience his death to sin, experience life in the heavenlies and be filled with the Holy Spirit.

A mother who is having trouble giving up her son to his wife may be sharing these paragraphs. She should recognize that any hindrance she places in her son’s way at this point is a hindrance to the will of God. It is this *break* which assists him to be joined unto his wife.

When the husband has broken those hampering emotional ties with his parents, his wife will realize (in terms of human relationships) she is *number one* in his life. This is a giant step toward her emotional security.

The husband being “joined” to his wife.

Paul indicates the husband’s leaving his parents is only a part of the “marriage strengthening” he has in mind. The other aspect is that he becomes “joined” to his wife.

The word “joined” in verse 31 means to be “glued.” It is this strong type of union God has in mind to cement our marriages together.

First Corinthians 6:16 makes it clear that the physical act makes husband and wife one flesh. The kind—the depth—of a marriage relationship Paul is encouraging comes about only through divine power.

That divine power is available. Again we return to the possibility of being dead to sin, experiencing life in the heavenlies and being filled with the Holy Spirit.

It is important to recall that all facets of our Christian lives are a matter of growth—and when we speak of growth, we speak of “time.”

The matter of a man being “joined” to his wife is a lifetime process. The importance is not whether we are perfectly one as much as “are we seeing progress?” Is there more oneness now than there was a year ago? Slowness in change should not be discouraging; discouragement should come only if there is no change over a period of months and years.

“Joined” to his wife as one flesh—the husband should patiently, responsively “let it happen through the grace of God.”

The husband ministers to his wife’s emotional needs by *loving* and *leaving* properly. He is to love his wife as he loves his own physical body, nourishing and cherishing her as he would care for himself. He is to *leave* emotional ties with his parents which rob him of emotional ties with his wife, thus allowing God to join him to his wife as one flesh with her.

REVIEW THE CHAPTER

True or False

1. Never does the Apostle Paul hint for husbands to enforce submission of their wives. _____
2. The wife is the one who has difficulty breaking away from her parents, especially her mother. _____

Fill in the Blanks

1. As the husband cares for his own physical body, *nourishing* and *cherishing* it, he will _____.
2. Though he is never to dishonor his parents, the husband is to make his wife (in terms of human relationships) _____.

FOR MEDITATION

1. Every husband should be acutely aware that *most women find it extremely difficult to have a good image of themselves*. They need a “spoken word” from their husbands, and they need it often!
2. The Spirit-controlled husband will surely tell his wife how vitally important she is to him, and to the Kingdom of God. If the husband refuses to encourage his wife—with spoken words—something is missing in his own walk with the Lord.
3. The husband ministers to his wife’s emotional needs by *loving* and *leaving* properly. He is to love his wife as he loves his own physical body, *nourishing* and *cherishing* her as he would care for himself. He is to *leave* emotional ties with his parents which rob him of emotional ties with his wife, thus allowing God to join him to his wife as one flesh with her.

EXERCISES

1. Discuss the statement that Paul never hints for husbands to enforce submission.

2. Express your agreement or disagreement with the statements that the husband is the “mood setter” in the home and he must provide the “right atmosphere.”

chapter eleven

Gracefulness Through The Wife's Joyful Response To Her Husband (I)

The coordination which produces peak level performance is between the head and the body—between the husband and wife. Alongside the husband's divine love the wife has responsibility to place her submissiveness. The coordination is between *both* the head and the body.

We think it is proper to say again that when we speak of the wife as the husband's body, we are not referring to the wife's *body as* belonging to the husband. We are saying the wife, the total person—body, soul and spirit—is the husband's body in the spiritual sense. In the marital union *he* is the head, *she* is the body.

We have discussed the wife's submission in an earlier chapter; now we view it from another perspective. Any submission a wife brings to the marriage—even out of sheer duty—is better than a rebellious attitude; resigned submission is better than no submission. What the Father has in mind, however, is an infinitely more delightful relationship between spouses. The marriage may be enjoyed at “peak level performance”—on the top side of joyfulness—when there is willing, voluntary submission on the part of the wife.

Joyfully Receiving Spiritual Direction From Her Husband

A marriage has opportunity to reach its stride when the wife *joyfully* receives spiritual direction from her husband. It is God's plan that the husband teach spiritual truth to his wife.

We do not wish to imply that the husband seeks to control every moment of his wife's life—neither the Lord nor her husband desires this; however, every man who walks with the Lord has high spiritual ideals for his marriage.

The wife should be joyfully receptive to his leadership. We have already shown that

the husband’s responsibility is to minister to his wife with words of exhortation, explanation and comfort. The submissive wife should receive his loving ministry joyfully, willingly.

There are know cases of wives who have not wanted their husbands to teach them God’s word.

Here is a classic case of the flesh, the devil and the world joining together to do damage to the marriage relationship.

Husbands and wives of any age grouping can have problems at this juncture, but it is especially painful to younger couples. Most young women have far better understanding of spiritual matters than do young men.

When we counsel young couples who are planning marriage, we usually take them through several passages of Scripture, providing Bibles so they may read along with us. Only occasionally does the young man even attempt to find the passages. Most of the time the young ladies find the passages with ease. If her knowledge of the makeup of the Bible is greater than his, most likely her knowledge of the *content* and *meaning* is greater than his.

She must, however, let her husband know she is willing to receive spiritual insight and direction at his hands. She must go even beyond that—she should tell him she is *dependent* on him for her spiritual growth.

When the wife informs the husband she is depending on him for her spiritual growth *she is placing a great amount of pressure on him. That’s where the spiritual pressure belongs—on the husband.* This is the way the wife finds real growth in Christ. It is God’s plan for the husband to lead spiritually; a marriage without the spiritual leadership of the husband will be (spiritually) less than it should be.

A husband may be intimidated and left with feelings of inferiority if his wife insists that he be the spiritual leader of the marriage. He does not know how to act in such a position. But God will change the husband who is willing to be changed.

Young ladies are more mature than young men, but all of us know of people who “blossomed” immediately when given responsibility. We are suggesting this will happen to the husband when given spiritual leadership. But we have a much stronger assertion—we are claiming God Himself will change that husband.

A professor at a Christian college has told how he and a colleague would watch some backward, uneducated “preacher boy” walk across the campus. His colleague would often say, “How God will make a minister out of *that* I’ll never know.” Yet, Some of those “green and ignorant boys” became outstanding ministers. For the young men it was a matter of gaining experience—and experiencing the grace of God.

This is what husbands need, experience and grace. They also need the confidence of their wives! It is imperative they know their wives depend on them.

The wife who joyfully receives spiritual direction from her husband is aiding the graceful coordination of her marriage.

A move toward peak level.

Joyfully Accepting Emotional Comfort From Her Husband

The head and body approach peak level coordination when the wife joyfully accepts emotional comfort from her husband. Verses 28-29 say the husband should love his wife as he loves his own body—nourishing and cherishing it.

Nourishing and cherishing have the connotation of feeding and clothing. But the passage underscores emotional needs and comfort.

The wife must be willing to accept her husband’s emotional comfort. She should tell him as much. When a wife experiences emotional upheaval to whom should she go for counsel? A friend? A professional counselor? A minister? Her first approach should be to her husband, allowing him to know she expects emotional comfort and help from him. Even if his suggestions are not the best she should go to someone else only as a last resort.

*Frequently the wife’s discomfort is caused by her husband.
She should tell him he is bringing her the very thing he
ought to guard her against.*

There are times when the husband brings discomfort out of his own “legalistic” walk with the Lord. His wife can be embarrassed by this. His legalism may have her involved in a ritual of Bible reading and attending services without any leadership of the Holy Spirit. She should inform him she is in need of relaxation. This is not “going against” her husband; it is the body informing the head of needed change.

In the physical world our bodies speak to our brains. Bodies may become so over-taxed they cease to function as well as they are able. The body sends a message to the brain, indicating overwork. This is not rebellion, it is simply a matter of the brain receiving a clear message from the body. The wife, who is the body, may lovingly send messages to the head, the husband. This is a benefit of coordination.

Every marriage needs emotional security. A great part of it is supplied by the leadership of the husband. The wife must accept his leadership, his emotional comfort.

Another condition of peak level performance.

Joyfully Recognizing God’s Practical Purpose Through Her Husband

Our God is not One of whim or caprice or arbitrariness—there is grand purpose in all He does. When the wife is able to recognize God has a practical purpose for her submis-

sion to her husband’s leadership, she will more readily enjoy the peak level performance of marriage.

Coming to this place may be the most painful part of the marital relationship because of the presence of the “know-it-all” attitude. It is our sin problem.

We all need a great measure of grace to admit that even God has a better idea than we do. It is the natural tendency for each of us to think “we know best” in every situation. We are commanded to lay our “know-it-all” attitude on the cross of Christ and submit to His infinite wisdom. Now the wife is commanded to go even further: she is to lay aside her “know-it-all” attitude in the presence of her husband.

Compounding the matter even more is the fact that most wives are more intelligent than their husbands; most are more studious. But though they are more studious and more clever—smarter!—than their husbands, God has commanded them to be in submission to those same marital mates.

For some wives such submission seems impossible—except for the grace of God; that grace of God, though, *is* available for every wife.

A part of the practical purpose is realized by the fact that a home cannot have two *equal* leaders. In most issues within the family, input from both marital partners will assist in coming to the proper conclusion. There are instances, however, in which a praying husband and praying wife will honestly disagree, both believing themselves correct. With their thinking in opposite directions, one must have responsibility for the decision. The husband is the God-appointed head of the union; the wife must submit to that leadership. This is the will of God for the wife.

One of God’s purposes is to avoid confusion. If the wife is able to recognize the practicability of God’s purposes, it will make her submission joyful. *God’s* plan will bring the most joy for the one who willfully submits to it.

We have previously mentioned the four specific “submissions” presented in the New Testament. Christians are to submit themselves to Jesus Christ; children to their parents; employees to their employers; wives are to submit themselves to their husbands. In the event Christians, children or employees refuse to submit, then Christ, parents and employers respectively have authority to administer discipline designed to bring about submissiveness.

The husband is given no such authority. Such a victory on the part of the husband would be hollow, empty. The union of husband and wife is the fusing together of two persons whose status in the sight of God is equal, but who have different assignments from Him. The very nature of the wife’s role is such that only a willful, voluntary submission on her part will satisfy her, bring out the best in her husband, and honor Jesus Christ in the marriage.

Christians, children and employees find their greatest freedom in submission. When there is full submission on their part, there is no longer the internal struggle of “living against the grain.”

The same is true of the wife. Her voluntary submission to her husband means she no longer lives with constant, internal struggle. This releases her, *frees* her, from resentment and bitterness and “living against the grain.”

This kind of personal freedom aids and abets coordination between the head and body.

Peak level performance is the result!

The wife who continuously experiences her crucifixion, burial and resurrection and continuously receives the filling of the Holy Spirit is empowered to be the submissive wife Paul describes.

REVIEW THE CHAPTER**True or False**

1. The wife should tell her husband that she is dependent on him for her spiritual growth. _____
2. Most wives are more intelligent than their husbands. They are more studious. But though they are more studious and more clever—*smarter!*—than their husbands, God has commanded them to be in submission to those same marital mates. _____

Fill in the Blanks

1. A marriage has opportunity to reach its stride when the wife *joyfully* receives spiritual direction from her husband. _____
_____.
2. *The wife who continuously experiences her crucifixion, burial and resurrection and receives the filling of the Holy Spirit* _____
_____.

FOR MEDITATION

1. There are times when the husband brings discomfort out of his own “legalistic” walk with the Lord. His wife can be embarrassed by this. His legalism may have her involved in a ritual of Bible reading and attending services without any leadership of the Holy Spirit.
2. There are instances in which a praying husband and praying wife will honestly disagree, both believing themselves correct. With their thinking in opposite directions, one must have responsibility for the decision. The husband is the God-appointed head of the union; the wife must submit to his leadership. This is the will of God for the wife.

EXERCISES

1. Evaluate the statement “Most young women have far better understanding of spiritual matters than do young men.”

2. Evaluate the statement, “Frequently the wife’s discomfort is *caused* by her husband. She should tell him he is bringing her the very thing he ought to guard her against.”

chapter twelve

Gracefulness Through The Wife's Joyful Response To Her Husband (II)

Every instance of submission on the part of the wife has not immediately ushered in peak level performance or an “overnight marital success story.” There are, however, some added ingredients of joy for the wife simply because she is in God’s will and has found God’s grace to submit to her husband.

Great outward changes will ultimately come in a marriage when the wife is submissive. Even if changes do *not* come as she wishes, she will have the inner joy and satisfaction of knowing she has been obedient to her Lord. For *her* this is peak level life as a wife.

We shall consider some New Testament statements which shed light on the wife’s submissiveness to her husband.

Joyful Submissiveness—Even if the Husband Is Not Living with Divine Love

Only God knows the emotions of a loving Christian wife whose husband indicates no love for God and shows little love for her. Those emotions go from deep disappointment to broken-hearted concern for the husband’s spiritual welfare.

The Apostle Peter has a lucid, heartening word to the wife in such a circumstance. He writes:

Wives, fit in with your husbands’ plans; for then if they refuse ... to listen when you talk to them about the Lord, they will be won by your respectful, pure behavior. Your godly lives will speak to them better than any word. First Pet. 3:1 TLB

His “admonition” makes reference to husbands who are not Christians, but the prin-

ciple he espouses certainly pertains to Christian men who are not living in the light of Scripture.

The wife who has a deep longing for her husband to be in God’s will is given a “genius” of a plan. It should have careful, detailed attention. Peter indicates that the wife’s means of reaching her husband who is adamant to her witness—is by *not talking to him* about his relationship with God. The wife should not be deceived into thinking she can talk her husband into a walk with God.

All of us know of people who have been *talked to death* concerning their relationship with God. A stubborn husband will consider his wife as “nagging” if she constantly talks to him about the Lord; especially is this true if her tone has the slightest hint of condemnation or self-pity.

But the heavenly Father will use the instrument of submissiveness to bring the husband to His will. The wife will have an added ingredient of joy if she employs it.

Joyful Submissiveness— The Way to Deep, Inner Beauty

Most of us have a deep appreciation for that which is beautiful. There is beauty in graceful body movements, in a sunset, a pastoral scene or a range of mountains. Everyone has said of some lovely lady, “She is beautiful.”

We are sure every woman would like to be beautiful. She can be. God teaches as much in his word. Peter encourages wives to possess a real beauty—the *inner* kind.

Don’t be concerned about the outward beauty that depends on jewelry, or beautiful clothes, or hair arrangement. Be beautiful inside, in your hearts, with the lasting charm of a gentle and quiet spirit which is so precious to God. First Pet. 3:3-4, TLB

Peter understands jewelry, clothes and hair arrangements are part of a lady’s outer beauty—and he does not condemn it. He is speaking comparatively when he says the lady is not to be concerned about her outer beauty. *He maintains inner beauty is of infinitely greater importance.* He charges, “Be beautiful inside,” with the lasting charm of a gentle and quiet spirit. Beauty and attractiveness—from her inner person.

It is of import that we give further attention to Peter’s statement of unconcern for physical attractiveness. We repeat, he speaks *comparatively*. While inner beauty is essential, he is not suggesting a wife should blatantly disregard her physical appearance. We do not believe that Peter had come to a place of total unconcern for a wife’s physical attractiveness.

No husband is satisfied coming home to a wife who does not keep herself in a proper manner. He may never mention it, but it is unsettling to him. In the pre-marital days of courting, it is unlikely she wanted her husband-to-be to have a glance at her before she had spent adequate time preparing her physical appearance.

Peter emphasizes that the wife’s spirit and attitude are the most important things about her. What she is *inside* produces the gentle, meek, quiet spirit which makes her a beautiful person.

Peter adds one sentence concerning the wife’s inner person:

That kind of beauty was seen in the saintly women of old, who trusted God and fit into their husbands’ plans. First Pet. 3:5, TLB

Joyful Submissiveness— An Exquisite Example in Sarah

There is a scene in Genesis 18:12 where Sarah refers to her husband as her lord. Peter mentions the incident.

Even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement. First Pet. 3:6

The word “lord” denotes *respect* and *a sense of authority*. Peter uses the fact Sarah called him “lord” as an illustration of her obedience to him. Sarah’s subjection to her husband and her reference to him as lord are interpreted for us with the word “obedience.”

Though these are strongly defined expressions of a wife’s subjection, they are meant in an adult context. Sarah did not obey as a *child*, but as a loving, adult *wife*. It was, though, obedience to the will of her husband.

Peter concludes that present day Christian wives are actually “daughters of Sarah” if they display the same spirit of submissiveness Sarah displayed. Though this is counter to the teachings of present day society—which often heaps scorn upon such commitment from a wife—God has promised blessing, joy, happiness to all the daughters of Sarah.

Joyful Submissiveness— The Wife Respecting the Position of “Husband”

The very position of “husband,” because it is God-appointed, is one which calls for respect. The wife is recognizing the Lord’s scheme of things when she realizes her husband is in a position of respect.

In Romans 13 we are told governments and authorities are of the Lord. Paul admonishes everyone to pay their dues—“Tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; *fear to whom fear*; honour to whom honour” (13:7, author’s italics). The word translated as “fear” in Romans 13 is the same word translated as “reverence” in Ephesians 5:33—“The wife see that she *reverence* her husband” (author’s italics).

In light of the Romans passage it is apparent the word “reverence” is the proper word (rather than “fear”). Reverence, *respect* is the proper Christian attitude toward a position of authority and importance. The husband has such a place in the marriage—the wife is to

look at him with respect.

What if the husband so conducts himself that his wife cannot respect him? Paul does not argue the respect must be earned or deserved; by virtue of his position as “husband” he is to be looked upon with respect.

The account of King Saul’s pursuit of young David lends an illustration to this thought. Saul’s insane jealousy of David led him to seek David’s life. He spent much time and energy in pursuit of David in his attempt to assassinate him. He even alienated his own children with his ungodly behavior.

On an occasion Saul entered a cave where David was hiding. It was David’s opportunity to “execute” Saul; however, he merely cut off the skirt of Saul’s robe. Even then, though he did not harm Saul, David was conscience-stricken because he had cut away Saul’s skirt: David said:

The Lord forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the Lord’s anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the Lord. First Sam. 24:6

David was not restrained because of the character of Saul. His restraint was altogether related to the “position” of Saul as the anointed of the Lord.

The story of David and Saul well illustrates how the wife is to “respect” the position of husband. She will be fitting in with the plan of God from the ages.

We can conceive of a sweet and humble wife who may have married outside of the will of God now saying, “I know God didn’t want me to marry him. I did a foolish thing and now I am sorry. And I cannot believe God wants me to respect him—not the way he treats me now.”

Husbands may not deserve, expect, demand, or even desire the respect of their wives, but God wills it. It is an added joy for a submissive wife to respect the position of “husband.”

She is exercising God’s will within her own will.

Joyful Submissiveness— The Wife’s Freedom from Terror

Some ladies have fear of placing themselves in complete submission to their husbands; they believe to do so would place them in grave danger. Peter implies just such a barrier may stand in the way of submissiveness. He says present day wives may be regarded as “daughters of Sarah” as long as they do well, “and are not afraid with any amazement” (1 Pet. 3:6). The word “amazement” in the King James Version actually means “terror.” Peter is speaking of wives who will be submissive to their husband without fear of terror.

There is a natural fear in the heart of a wife whose husband is anything but loving and

tender. But Peter is saying that when she is willing to do the will of God in submitting to her husband, *she is bringing the activity of God into her marriage.*

Just as he says a wife can win her husband without a word, Peter is now contending she can trust God to free her from the terror in her marriage. In each instance the apostle implies the faithful submission of the wife brings God Himself upon the scene. The Father will protect her from any terror which results from her submission.

Another added ingredient of joy.

Joyful Submissiveness— Of Great Price in the Sight of God

Peter refers to ladies of meek and quiet spirits “which is in the sight of God of great price” (1 Pet. 3:4). Submissiveness is also of great price in the sight of God. Peter indicates that wives adorn themselves with a meek and quiet spirit by their submissiveness.

Anything the Lord values to be of great price must be given consideration by those who love God.

The Old Testament once more yields an illustrative glimpse into what we are projecting. King David was engaged in battle with the Philistines. Most likely he was tired, hungry, thirsty. Perhaps his nerves were edgy. In his anxiety he simply voiced a desire for a drink from the well at Bethlehem.

And the three mighty men brake through the hosts of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem, that was by the gate, and took it, and brought it to David: nevertheless he would not drink thereof, but poured it out unto the Lord. And he said, Be it far from me, O Lord, that I should do this: is not this the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives? Therefore he would not drink it. Second Sam. 23:16-17

David merely expressed a *desire* and these men placed their very lives in danger to see that he could have nothing more than a simple drink of water from a certain well.

Would not the child of God do even more for the expressed will of *the Lord God Himself.*

The living word of our Lord says a spirit of meekness in the wife is of great value to God. The wife who loves God will have a desire for submissiveness to her husband—*if she knows it will bring joy to the heart of her Lord.*

Meekness and quietness are garments of beauty to the wife. It is attractive—it brings honor to the wife—it brings glory to the Lord.

The wife who functions as her husband’s body, regardless of his own disinterest in peak level performance, will find herself growing, glowing, *glorying* in these added ingredients of submissiveness.

And let her remember all the grace she needs for this submissiveness is available as she lives out of her union with Jesus Christ.

REVIEW THE CHAPTER

True or False

- 1. Great outward changes will ultimately come in a marriage when the wife is submissive. _____
- 2. When a wife seeks to lead her husband to a closer walk with the Lord, her best method is pleading with him. _____

Fill in the Blanks

- 1. We are sure every woman would like to be beautiful. She can be. God teaches as much in His word. Peter encourages _____
_____.
- 2. The wife is recognizing the Lord’s scheme of things when _____
_____.

FOR MEDITATION

- 1. Peter *emphasizes* that the wife’s spirit and attitude are the most important things about her. What she is *inside* produces the gentle, meek, quiet spirit which makes her a beautiful person.
- 2. The living word of our Lord says a spirit of meekness in the wife is of great value to God. The wife who loves God will have a desire to be submissive to her husband—*if she knows it will bring joy to the heart of God.*

EXERCISES

- 1. In your own words explain the statement of 1 Peter that submissive wives can win their husbands without a word.

- 2. Discuss the Apostle Peter’s contention that inward beauty is of greater importance than outward beauty.

- 3. Why did the Apostle Peter commend Sarah for calling Abraham “lord?”

4. Explain why wives can be submissive to their husbands without fear.

5. What is your response to the statement that as a wife lives out her union with Christ she will have all the grace she needs to be submissive?

part five

Gracefulness With Fringe Benefits

Professional athletes enjoy contracts which are extremely lucrative; this is a day of unparalleled salaries for them. In addition to the salaries, the contracts have incentive clauses, allowing the athletes some profitable “fringe benefits.”

Fringe benefits are an integral part of the American job market. Many major corporations provide them.

Those who engage in physical activities earn important fringe benefits. In seeking to coordinate minds and muscles they reap health benefits.

There are tremendous “fringe benefits” for husbands and wives who so relate to each other that they become *graceful marital bodies*. We will discuss some of those fringe benefits.

chapter thirteen

Gracefulness With Added Purpose

Throughout this work we have underscored the benefits within the marital body when spouses are willing for God's grace to permeate their lives. In this chapter we discuss some of the blessings beyond the marriage relationship.

Purpose—The Sheer Joy of Performing Well

A man said that when he was in junior high school he convinced the custodian to admit him into the school gymnasium at daybreak many mornings. Morning after morning, with sheer delight, he practiced basketball. He was not doing it to impress anyone, since he was almost always alone on the court. He simply delighted in learning new shots and “moves” with which to make those shots.

He said he practiced with the hope of developing into a good player, but was “in heaven” just being able to participate. He was thrilled when he mastered a new “move” or a new shot; there was sheer joy in just practicing—the sheer joy of doing well.

With an infinitely greater degree of sobriety we should view our marriages in the same manner. There is “sheer delight” in having a marriage which is being *perfected*. For us Christians, it is “perfected” only as it is brought into harmony with the will of God.

For the sheer delight of doing well—in a marriage, this is legitimate purpose.

Purpose—Revealing to the Church How it Should Relate to Christ

In our Ephesians passage (5:22-33) Paul repeatedly emphasizes a husband and wife should relate to each other as do Christ and the church. Christ and the husband are heads of a body; the church and the wife are the bodies of the head.

When the wife joyfully relates to her husband as his body, she is sharing a visible demonstration to the church membership of how the church—each member and the congregation as a whole—should relate to Jesus Christ, the Head.

There is great need in every church for just such a demonstration. As long as members, committees, boards and congregations seek to function in the light of their own wisdom (and from their own resources), that church is in desperate need of visible demonstration of how it should relate to Christ.

The demonstration may be beautifully presented by the wife who is totally submissive to her husband.

Purpose—Revealing to the Church How Christ Should Relate to It

The husband also should provide example to the church. As he has “given himself up” he is the very life of his wife. He is able to give her insights which result in her deliverance from the gripping power of sin, to give her guidance, to give her comfort, to cause her to grow — and he is joined unto her.

He is giving a visible illustration to the members of what Christ does for the church. He does so with the divine love he expresses to his wife.

The husband filled with divine love is a living illustration of the love of Jesus Christ to the congregation.

Purpose—The Strengthening of Other Marriages

“The *family* is in trouble.”

How often we encounter this remark. It is a reference to the family as an institution, but it is a conclusive observation concerning the individual families of our nation. We cannot deny the truth of the statement; our divorce rate forces us to admit its accuracy.

Even among couples who stay together, *many* have never realized in the “fullest sense” what it means to be husband and wife.

In the light of such matrimonial predicament, it must be a breath of strikingly fresh air for an unfulfilled couple to come under the influence of a husband and wife who have the *sheer joy* of marriage between them.

Think of that “fringe benefit” of marriage — to influence a struggling couple. There are couples all around us who need that breath of fresh marital air.

So ...

... while you may have ultimate joy by permitting the Lord to elevate your *own* marriage to the heights He projects, you may be the instruments by which some *other* couple is elevated to that same joy ...

... and those whom you influence may breathe fresh air into still another couple ...

... and your influence can go on and on ...

... and it's *worth it!*

REVIEW THE CHAPTER**True or False**

1. For the sheer delight of doing well—in a marriage, this is legitimate purpose. _____
2. By his divine love toward his wife, a husband demonstrates to the church the way Jesus desires to relate to the church. _____

Fill in the Blanks

1. Think of the “fringe benefit” of marriage—to influence a struggling couple. There _____.
2. Even among couples who stay together, *many* have never realized in the “fullest sense” _____.

FOR MEDITATION

When the wife joyfully relates to her husband as his body, she is sharing a visible demonstration to the church membership of how the church—each member and the congregation as a whole—should relate to Jesus Christ, the Head.

EXERCISES

1. Evaluate the statement “The high expectations of marriage may be realized when spouses are willing for God’s grace to permeate their lives.”

2. Explain how a wife impacts her church by being submissive to her husband.

3. Give your thought on how a couple experiencing a joyful marriage can impact other couples.

Epilogue

“There is just too much water under the bridge to start over.” Some of you honestly feel this way. You may carry many and deep scars from hurts suffered over the years.

Let us encourage you to allow Jesus Christ to forgive through you. This God-kind of love which Scripture urges upon us all will “dry up” the torrential Rivers of Resentment, dam up the ravaging Flood Tides of Unforgiveness and remove the Mountains of Grudges.

As God conquered the Red Sea through Moses, Jesus Christ can more than conquer your spirit of unforgiveness as He lives in union with you—and through you.

Not only will Christ enable you to forgive concerning the past, He will empower you to be a forgiving person in the future.

“Christ in you” and “you in Christ” means forgiveness can be a *lifestyle* for a *lifetime*.

Begin today ...

OTHER BOOKS AVAILABLE

Other books teaching the life of grace are available at a very affordable cost. We make no profits from the sale of our books. You can order books through our web site. Our Internet address is:

www.livingbygrace.org

OUR ONENESS WITH CHRIST: a basic book discussing the New Testament teaching of the believer's union with Christ. ONENESS presents these liberating truths in themes.

OUR ONENESS WITH CHRIST WORKBOOK: a companion book aiding in detailed study of ONENESS.

NUESTRA UNION CON CRISTO: translation of OUR ONENESS WITH CHRIST in Spanish.

INTRODUCTION TO OUR ONENESS WITH CHRIST: a brief introductory presentation of the basic truths of the believer's oneness with Christ.

CAIN-LIKENESS TO CHRIST-LIKENESS: another companion book to ONENESS. The first three chapters are a digest of ONENESS. The book then broadens the concept of the believer's oneness with Christ revealing specific changes the Lord brings into the lives of believers who experience their oneness with Christ.

HERE'S LIFE: a verse-by-verse exposition of Romans 5:12-8:39 which is the most extensive passage setting forth the truths of the believer's oneness with Christ in crucifixion, burial, and resurrection. This is especially helpful to those who desire verse-by-verse Bible study.

ASSURANCE: a sub-title of this book is “You Can Know for Sure.” The book sets forth the teachings of 1 John on how believers can know for sure they are children of God. Dr. Gene Reynolds, the author, uses the analogy of vital signs in the physical realm to develop the vital signs in the spiritual realm.

THE PURSUIT OF THE UPWARD CALL: an exposition of Philippians 3:1-14. The passage reveals that Paul’s one passion was an unceasing experience of life in the heavenlies. He expresses his approach for arriving at such an experience. Other passages are used to discuss the blessings of life in the heavenlies.

LIVING BY GRACE: a book of 52 chapters originally written as devotionals for our Web Site. The first eight chapters explain the way of “living by grace.” The remaining chapters tell of the blessings for believers who pursue a life of “living by grace.”

