

# THE COUNSELOR

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## THE GODLY MARRIAGE

Christians enter marriage believing theirs will last no matter what. They have God and the fellowship of other believers. They took marriage prep classes and had premarital counseling. Both made marriage vows before God. They are certain that their marriage will be different, that theirs will endure. It should. Time goes on. They live happily ever after. Not! Why is the divorce rate for Christian marriages the same as non Christian marriages? How can there be so much loneliness, confusion, turmoil, anger, bitterness, resentment, chaos, hurt, disappointment, and destruction in Christian marriages today? What's going on here? Where's the love? Where's the respect? Where's the tenderness, kindness and sacrifice? Many Christian couples live out their days in quiet desperation while others argue constantly. This is not God's plan. Marriage is supposed to be good. God's plan for marriage is perfect. What is a Christian marriage supposed to look like? What are the husband and wife's roles? What does the Bible say? How do you define a Godly marriage? Tons of sermons and books have addressed this topic through the years. Myths about marriage still exist. Hearts and spirits get crushed when visions and expectations for marriage go unfulfilled. Infidelity and addictions rock Christian marriages too. If God is for us how can this happen? Marriage is meant to last. Godly marriages can and do exist. They're not perfect, but they resolve their problems. Husband and wife submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. They press on. They bring glory to Christ in their marriages.

### STRUGGLES



financial pressures, and problems parenting, stress married couples. They start out Godly and positive but descend into anger, bitterness, and resentment in a few short years. Communication, money, physical intimacy, and other problems follow. One thing affects another. Decision making becomes tedious and results in complete communication breakdown. It's sad to see couples go from joyful happy faces, full of optimism and hope to negativity and despair. Problems in the bedroom reflect struggles and issues

in the marriage. Warmth and tenderness turn into coldness and harshness. They deny each other affection and physical intimacy. Needs go unmet.

Emotional and sexual infidelity often occurs. Selfishness prevails. Many wives struggle with the true meaning of submission, they resist and disrespect their husbands. They undermine their authority and role as head of the family. Many husbands mishandle or abuse their wives, verbally, emotionally, and sometimes physically. Quoting scripture, they demand submission from their wives. They control their wives. They do not show love to their wives. Many husbands stray from God by becoming passive. They defer and delegate to their wives instead of leading them. Things don't go right, they don't go God's way, when the wife leads the marriage and family spiritually. This is not God's plan. This is not a Biblical marriage. Many Christian marriages today experience additional stresses like unresolved pain and baggage from their past, blended family troubles, anger, anxiety, depression, poor conflict resolution skills, and excessive debt. Unforgiveness wrecks Christian marriages. It's like a cancer that starts small and overtakes the whole body. Christian marriages struggle and collapse without forgiveness.

### GODLY MARRIAGE

Biblical marriage is God's perfect plan. No marriage is perfect, but husband and wife can live in harmony, love one another deeply, resolve conflicts and problems, live within the parameters of God's Will, glorify Him, and forgive one another. Christ gives them the tools, love, and power to do this! God's purpose for marriage is to reveal Christ. The goal of marriage is heart, spiritual and physical intimacy (Biblical Foundations for Freedom, 2004). The two shall become one. "And they will become one flesh." (Genesis 2:24). One flesh, one mind. The two operate as one. Two independent units think and act as one, in one accord. They depend on and complement one another. They are intimate with each other on all levels. They remain spiritually intimate with God. God accomplishes great things through good marriages. They inspire others and glorify God when they seek intimacy. The intimacy unifies, focuses, and empowers them to accomplish these goals. (Biblical Foundations for Freedom 2004). The husband's love for his wife is constant and pure in the Godly marriage. He is commanded to love his wife. "Husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it." (Ephes. 5:25). The husband's love for his wife is deep, it's real and active, it's patient, kind, persistent, unselfish, unconditional, and bears all things. Husband and wife are deeply committed to God and one another. They love each other unconditionally. You can see it on their faces and the way they treat each other. Their love is based on commitment. Husband and wife feel secure in a Godly marriage. Secure in God's love, there's no room for emptiness or loneliness. The husband is the spiritual leader in the home. He loves and leads his wife like Jesus loved the church (Ephes. 5:25). The Godly husband is considerate of his wife (1 Peter 3:7), controls his temper, and is not harsh or bitter towards her (Col. 3:19).

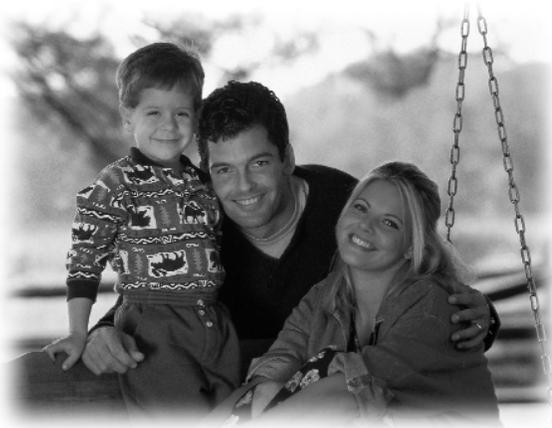
He loves his wife as he loves himself. The Godly husband emulates Christ. He meets his wife's needs through self-sacrificing love. He understands her specific needs. The Godly husband praises his wife, he delights only in her, is not tyrannical, provides for and protects her, loves her with agape love, and cares for her spiritually. He is knowing, aware, interested, and concerned about his wife (Nazarene Friends 2004). The Godly husband has many qualities. A Godly husband is a wise husband.

Proverbs say a lot about the characteristics of a wise man. He is kind and compassionate; honest; hard working; truthful; exercises self-control; has a gentle tongue; is generous; willing to be corrected by his wife; listens to counsel; is a man of integrity; is faithful and reliable; forgiving; admits he is wrong; is humble; a peacemaker; controls his temper; avoids excesses; keeps a confidence; fears God and obeys His Word; is not jealous; and has a positive outlook on life (www.bible.org). The Godly wife is Godly. She fears God and has a relationship with Him. She is wise, gracious, faithful, and honors her husband. She is a Proverbs 31 wife! She submits to her husband (1 Peter 3). She exhibits God-pleasing behavior. The Godly wife praises and encourages her husband. She is not riddled with fear and worry. She prays for her husband. Most importantly, the Godly wife respects her husband (Ephes. 5:33).

Godly marriages are based on God, love, and submission. Husband and wife live for one another, not for themselves. Submission is based on love not selfishness. They lay down their lives for one another. The dreaded "S-word" (Submission) is handled. There's power in submission. There's power in the Godly marriage. Mutual submission exists. They "Submit to one another out of reverence for

Christ." (Ephes. 5:21). The wife submits to the husband (Ephes. 5:22-24), he submits to God and loves his wife (Ephes. 5:25), and they both submit to

each other out of reverence for Christ. The husband is a servant leader, submitting, offering himself, giving himself to those he serves (Christ) and leads (his wife). There is no selfishness in submission. They let God mold them into His purposes for their relationship. They work with God. They resolve differences. They are affectionate and physically intimate. Sexuality (love making) is wonderful between them. They delight in pleasing one another.



## SOLUTIONS

Dr. Emerson Eggerichs addresses a major problem in marriages today, in his book, *Love and Respect* (2004). He admits that a wife's primary need is to feel loved while her husband's driving need is to feel respected. Things fall apart when either of these needs go unmet. Spouses react negatively toward one another. Eggerichs calls this the "Crazy Cycle." Without love, she reacts negatively and disrespectful, without respect, he reacts unloving (2004). They remain angry and deprive one another of the love and respect they so desperately need. God commands the husband to love his wife and her to respect him (Ephes. 5:33). The crazy cycle must be broken. Men and women must learn to understand one another. Women need love and men need respect more than anything. Disrespect crushes a man. Women wither without love. Conflict makes most men feel disrespected too (Eggerichs, 2004). It takes a lot of work, but troubled marriages can be restored. This will happen when the husband's love motivates his wife's respect and her respect for him motivates his love for her, (The Energizing Cycle, Eggerichs, 2004). The Reward Cycle occurs when the husband gives his love regardless of his wife's respect for him and she gives him respect regardless of his love for her. According to Eggerichs, the husband loves his wife by moving toward her and connecting with her, sharing his thoughts and feelings with her, understanding her rather than trying to "fix" things, resolving differences, remaining loyal, and esteeming her. The wife respects her husband by supporting him in his work, respecting and appreciating his desire to protect and provide for her and the family, recognizing him as having primary authority, letting him lead, trusting his ability to analyze things and offer solutions, letting him know that she is his friend and lover, and honoring his need for sexual release even when she doesn't feel like it. There is hope for damaged marriages. Restoration will come when husband and wife acknowledge their own sins before God and each other (Foundations for Freedom.net). They should reflect

on Psalm 107:33-35 and pray, using this Psalm. They should ask for forgiveness and take steps to deal with communication problems (Sin). They should identify the issues, classify each grievance, examine the problems, review them together, reflect on God's Word, repent (Psalm 107:13-16), apologize to one another, and follow up. It is important that the man goes first, asking for forgiveness. They should practice patience, love, kindness and renew affections. They must stand firm, face and resolve their anger. Divorce is not an option! Husband and wife should face conflicts by stating the problem, identifying what is at stake, list possible solutions, choose one and try one (Arp and Arp, 1996). Love is commitment. When problems arise, focus on the commitment first. Say, "We will stay together, we will resolve this, because we're committed to God and each other." A couple committed to God and obedience to Him thrives, they move through conflict, they grow from it. The solution is Jesus Christ, period! The more connected a husband and wife are to Christ, the stronger the marriage.

## GOD'S WAY

God calls and equips us to live Godly lives and have Godly marriages. He calls husbands and wives to meet each other's sexual needs, regard their bodies belonging to the other, and devote themselves to prayer (Corin. 7:1-7). The Godly marriage relationship encompasses all aspects of the couple's lives physical, emotional, spiritual, intellectual, and so forth. Men, love your wives, provide for them and lead them. Give your wives non sexual affection, listen to them, and communicate openly with them. Abide in Christ! Women, respect your husbands. Forgive them. Work with them. Pray for them. Love them. Be a proverbs 31 wife! Husbands and wives, love and obey Christ, honor Him with your marriage. Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Commit to Christ and to each other. Show your children what a Godly marriage looks like. Do it now! Do it God's way. His way always works!



## F.Y.I.

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