

**It's Your  
CHOICE -  
A Happy and  
God-Honoring  
Marriage**

**Paul D. Refior  
("Rafe")**

***It's Your Choice:  
A Happy and God-Honoring Marriage***

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IT'S YOUR CHOICE –  
A HAPPY AND  
GOD-HONORING  
MARRIAGE

Solid advice and suggestions from a Christian father

## **DEDICATION**

*This book is dedicated to Pamela Jo Refior, Nikki Jo Lambeth and Laura Marie White. My Pam is the sweetest person I have ever met. She is sharp and beautiful and she is an outstanding lady and a godly wife. Thankfully Nikki and Laura are blessed with the best qualities of my precious Pam while possessing and developing their independent great personalities and unlimited potentials.*

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## PREFACE

This book was first written as one of those transition events of life approached. Our oldest daughter, my precious Nikki, was engaged to marry Jonathan Lambeth.

When the first edition was completed, our sweet Laura had just graduated from high school and would be leaving in a few weeks for college. At the time of the second edition, Laura had just married Brian White. Imagine that – “an empty nest.” Oh how I thank the Lord that my dear Pamela and I have an exhilarating, fun, romantic and happy marriage. The truth is that the nest is not empty. Pam and I are happy together and the nest continues to be delightful. In fact, we are having the time of our lives!

Throughout the years I have been mindful of my responsibility before God, along with Pam, to bring up our daughters in the training and instruction of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4), and to impress spiritual truths on our children (Deuteronomy 6:6, 7). It is a high and holy blessing to be a father, and it has been a marvelous and joyful experience to join with my darling wife in the beautiful privilege and duty of parenting our lovely Nikki and Laura.

For all of those years I was the spiritual leader to my sweet daughters and the priest of our home. I passed that mantle on to sturdy young men who love the Lord. I confess that there was significant emotion in my heart before the weddings – heart tugs combined with the joy of knowing that our girls were walking closely with the Lord and were pressing forward in life according to God's will. After Nikki's engagement I began to think of the things I would like to articulate and pass on to my dear children at the times of their respective marriages. I felt a sense of urgency to share truths and principles from a Christian father to his Christian daughters.

Pam, Nikki, Laura and I put our heads together concerning what we should do as our “last family vacation” before Nikki would get married and Laura would go off to college. We decided to drive from Indiana to Manhattan and take in the city and a number of Broadway plays. I packed my Dictaphone and a number of cassette tapes for the trip. While driving there were times when my dear wife would fall asleep and the girls would either be sleeping or reading in the back seat. During those times I took hold of my Dictaphone and began to assemble what I figured would be a paper or long letter I could share with my daughters and their future husbands.

By the time we reached New York City I had dictated quite a bit of material. Consistent with my daily routine I arose early each day to have my quiet time. Since we were on vacation I stayed away from the hotel room until the girls had sufficient opportunity to sleep in. That meant that I had time to think about and do some outlining of various topics I would like to include in my collection of a father's thoughts and advice about having a happy and God-honoring marriage.

On the way back from New York there were again opportunities to complete more of such dictation. When the tapes were transcribed I realized that the expected paper or letter was going to end up being the length of a book. Being that far into the project I decided that I would see it through. Therefore this book is what this father is sharing with his own daughters. I may not be a scholar or a recognized expert, but I am entitled to share wisdom and advice as a father to my own dear children.

**It's Your CHOICE - Preface**

I wrote this book with dependence on the Lord and in honor to my precious Pam who has been my perfect helpmate, friend and lover. I trust that what I share will be very significant to my sweet Nikki and Laura. That in itself is the sufficient purpose for this book. If anyone else outside of the family enjoys or benefits from this book I will give thanks to the Lord.

I love you, Pamela Jo. I love you, Nikki Jo. I love you, Laura Marie.

## INTRODUCTION

I have no intention or expectation that the following groups of people will necessarily accept the principles set forth in this book or benefit from them: people who have not received Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior (i.e. people who are not true Christians); people who call themselves Christians but do not believe that the Bible is the inerrant, inspired and authoritative word of God; radicals who believe that the male race and female race are enemies; people who believe that females are inferior to males; people who buy into some humanistic or man-made design for marriage and for the roles of the husband and the wife in marriage; and people who believe that marriage is a conditional contract or temporary arrangement rather than an absolute covenant and commitment for life.

Here are some **important assumptions** that I make as I share advice and suggestions for having a happy and God-honoring marriage. When I use the word “you” I am obviously referring to the reader, whether it is the husband or the wife. **I assume** that you accept the responsibility before God for your **CHOICES**. **I assume** that you really mean business about having an outstanding marriage, even if it means casting off juvenile notions of constantly being with the boys or constantly being with the girls, and even if it means subordinating your individual or selfish goals or activities in order to enhance your spouse and your united life with your spouse. **I assume** that you will not be holding out restrictions, reservations, or conditions to your commitments to your spouse. And finally **I assume** that the principles and truths which you learn you will be committed to put into practice in your marriage.

The suggestions and advice contained in this book will alert you to a series of **CHOICES**. Choose well. Knowing about these things by itself is of little value. You must **DO IT!** In love I challenge you to make the **CHOICES** that will lead you forward on the sometimes difficult and challenging, yet exhilarating and delightful, experience of a happy and God-honoring marriage. On the human plane, a great Christian marriage is the closest thing to heaven you will know on this earth.

## Chapter One

### GOD'S INSTRUCTION TO HUSBANDS AND WIVES

There have been many books written about marriage. Obviously I agree with the author of this book, but what I say or what other authors say about marriage, husbands, wives, relationships, or anything else, is worthless if it is not in accord with the inspired, authoritative, inerrant and infallible Word of God, the Bible. I suggest that the starting point, middle point, and ending point for any presentation concerning the principles of marriage and how to have a happy and God-honoring husband-wife relationship, must be **God's truth as set forth in the Bible.**

With that firm conviction in mind I urge you to first read and meditate upon the verses of Scripture set out in Appendix A and to keep those verses in mind as you consider the advice and instruction which I attempt to give in this book.

## Chapter Two

### SPIRITUAL UNDERSTANDING

The Scriptural principles quoted in Appendix A may not be accepted or understood by the person who is not a believer in Jesus Christ. In fact, these truths will be foolishness to the unbeliever. How can I be certain about that? God Himself said so as follows:

#### **I Corinthians 2:7-16**

No, we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. However, as it is written: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him" – but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgment: "For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

(See also Matthew 13:11; John 8:43; John 13:7; John 14:17; John 16:12; Romans 11:33; I Corinthians 1:18-25; Ephesians 3:4-5; I John 5:20)

\* \* \* \* \*

The Bible says that a Christian can understand scriptural truths and receive instruction from God, while the unbeliever cannot. This explains why a marriage relationship is seriously out of whack if one spouse is a Christian and the other spouse is not a Christian. God himself describes such a situation as being "unequally yoked."

**I Corinthians 7:39** A woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, **but he must belong to the Lord.**

**II Corinthians 6:14-16** Do not be **yoked together** with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people."

\* \* \* \* \*

### **It's Your CHOICE – Spiritual Understanding**

The equal yoke principle is discussed further in the next Chapter. Both you and your spouse should be pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:14), and striving to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (II Peter 3:18). Attached hereto as Appendices C and D are **Accountability Questions for Men** and **Accountability Questions for Women**. Review those questions. How are doing? Also review Appendix E, **Principles for Christian Living**. I urge you to remain transparent before the Lord and to review these matters regularly and honestly. Furthermore, I suggest that you stand accountable to your spouse in the areas listed in said lists.

#### **VERY IMPORTANT:**

If you are not certain that you are a true Christian – if you are not absolutely sure that you have received Jesus Christ as your Savior – the, **please** turn to and study Appendix B starting at page 142 before proceeding to Chapter Three.

### **Chapter Three**

#### **CHRIST IN THE CENTER OF THE HOME – AND BEING EQUALLY YOKED**

Because God's principles are true, they are true for both the believer and the unbeliever. In fact, God's principles are true even if one chooses to reject or disbelieve them. Just as the sun falls upon the Christians and non-Christians alike, so truth is true and there is benefit in following God's way because it is the RIGHT way. However, many of the principles I discuss in this book can be applied only if the husband and wife are both true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ and have been born again (Psalm 14:2; Isaiah 64:7; Habakkuk 1:13; John 1:8, 12, 3:16, 8:24, 51, 10:9-13, 16:9; Romans 3:23; 5:1, 11, 6:23; 8:1, 8, 10:13; I Corinthians 15:21-22; II Corinthians 5:17, 6:2; Ephesians 1:13, 2:12-13; Philippians 2:6; Colossians 2:13-14; I Thessalonians 5:9; II Thessalonians 19; I Timothy 1:12, 16, 2:3-5; II Peter 3:9; I John 4:13, 17, 5:12-13).

In order for a marriage to be at its fullest potential and to be truly God-honoring, the husband and wife must be equally yoked (I Corinthians 7:39; II Corinthians 6:14). Therefore the Christian man must seek a Christian wife. The Christian woman must seek a Christian husband. However, it is still not enough for both the husband and wife to be Christians. Picture in your mind two oxen in a yoke. One oxen is deliberate in pushing forward and making progress and the other has no desire to stay in step with the first oxen and has no interest in where the first oxen is going. In that case there are two oxen in the yoke, but they are most certainly not "equally" yoked. Furthermore they cannot go in a unified direction or at a unified rate of progress. I suggest that to truly be equally yoked in a Christian marriage, the Christian husband and the Christian wife must both love the Lord with all of their heart, mind, soul and strength (Matthew 22:37; Mark 12:30), and must plow in step with each other.

Even if a spouse is a true believer, if he or she is not pursuing Christian growth through daily Bible study and prayer and is not striving to serve and please the Lord through obedience, then it is safe to say that he or she will be spiritually dull and will not be receiving the Holy Spirit's teaching and guidance through the illumination of the Word of God and will be insensitive to the leading of the Lord, and will not have a passion to please God.

This plays out in very practical ways in the marriage relationship. For example, a woman will not understand or agree with the husband being the head of the home, the leader in the home, the priest in the home or the protector and defender in the home unless she is a Christian AND she is walking with and growing in the Lord. It is similarly true that unless the man is a Christian AND walking with and growing in the Lord, the man will not believe or practice God's principles for the Christian husband, e.g. treating and considering his wife as a joint heir in Christ, loving his wife as Christ loved the Church and gave His life for her, loving his wife as he loves his own body, etc. If both the husband and wife have the goal to please the Lord (II Corinthians 5:9; John 8:29; Colossians 1:10-12), then they have the capacity to understand God's principles for marriage and to gladly obey God in their marriage. That in turn will allow the TRUTH to bring its benefits and blessings in the form of a happy and God-honoring marriage.

## It's Your CHOICE – Christ in the Center of the Home – and Being Equally Yoked

Christ must be the ultimate head and the center of the marriage. When the husband and wife believe the Bible and consider it to be perfect truth and authoritative, they will not second guess or challenge Biblical truth, and here are the wonderful results. If God said it, they believe it, they obey it, and they base their lives upon it. When God says that Christ is the head of every man and the man is the head of every woman (I Corinthians 11:3) that is accepted as true, and the husband and wife have the freedom to work to obey such truth and to put it into practice in their marriage. When we are admonished that Jesus Christ should have first place in everything (Colossians 1:18b) neither the husband nor the wife engages in any kind of turf war, but both bow down and worship their Savior who consecrated for them as believers a new and living way. The couple draws near to God together (Hebrews 10:19-25).

Picture a triangle with the Lord at the top and the husband and wife at the other two lower corners. This is a visual picture of the reality that as the husband and the wife each are drawing closer to God (moving up in the lines of that triangle), they are drawing necessarily closer to each other. Note that this is true only if they are both progressing closer to the Lord. This picture is so true. The closer you and your spouse get to the Lord, the closer you are to each other spiritually and relationally.

If you are serious about keeping Christ at the center of your marriage, then you need to establish Christ centered goals. As my life goals have become more simple through the years, I have become increasingly happy, joyful and peaceful in my marriage and in my inner being. My life goal is taken from Acts 20:24, “However, I consider my life as nothing to me if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me –the task of testifying to the gospel of God’s grace.” Think about that. It is a HUGE goal to enter heaven having reached that goal. (As an aside, I like to say “when I go to heaven” instead of “when I die” and “between now and heaven” instead of “for the rest of my life.” It is a great message, and it reflects the truth that the Christian HAS eternal life and will never die [John 3:16, 18, 36; I John 5:12-13]). If you are looking for a beautiful life goal of a great man, consider what the Apostle Paul stated in II Corinthians 5:9, “So we make if our **goal to please Him**, whether we are at home in the body or away from it.”

For the husband to be the leader of the home and the head of his wife, it is vital that the husband be diligent in his daily Bible study and praying. The husband does not have intelligence or natural abilities that are superior to his wife’s. The husband has the duty nonetheless to lead. Therefore he **must** draw upon the Lord to walk as he ought to walk and to lead as he ought to lead. Additionally, the husband must **demonstrate** that he is filling the role as priest of the home and head of the household by setting the example in his own commitment to Bible study and systematic, disciplined prayer.

Husbands, never forget that you must be a spiritual man. You must diligently work at being the spiritual leader not only in word, but in your own real day-to-day life.

Do you want to strive for something really big? Do you want to be a success in your marriage? Strive to know God and obey Him and to walk ever closer with Him. Strive to demonstrate the Lord in your life. Strive to aggressively tell others about a personal relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ. Strive to be an effective and godly husband or wife according to Scripture. Strive to be an effective and godly parent according to Scripture.

## It's Your CHOICE – Christ in the Center of the Home – and Being Equally Yoked

I became a Christian during my last semester of law school on January 19, 1975. I was one of those “impossible cases.” Yet the Lord drew me to Himself and provided the way for me to be saved. Although I had been a rascal, my precious Pamela had always been a mature, sweet, considerate, nice, tender, sensitive, and good person. Pam liked very much the changes in my lifestyle and attitudes after I received the Lord. At first she thought that I just had a new toy. Then as the changes continued and accelerated she knew that there was something real. On October 31, 1976 my dear wife received Christ herself and we were finally united in Christ.

Pam and I experienced “unequally yoked” struggles and tensions when we were not both Christians during that 21-month period. I remember well the day my Pamela looked me in the eye and sternly asked me the question, “Do you love God more or do you love me more?” That was tense. Another example was our disunity about giving. We were so very poor, and I was giving money to the Lord and that was interpreted by my Pam as a direct attack on her and our young Nikki by taking money out of our family’s mouths and giving it to the Lord.

When Pam and I were both unbelievers, we had a pretty good marriage as the world would see it. During the time when I was a Christian and Pam was not yet a believer, we continued to have a pretty good marriage, but we had those disconnections. After we were united in Christ, our relationship gained a miraculous life that was previously unattainable. When there is a truly Christian marriage that is centered in Christ and is guided by the Lord Himself and the principles of His Word, there is the potential of a relationship with immeasurable joy, satisfaction and fulfillment.

Let me summarize this chapter. Be equally yoked in faith - with both the husband and the wife being true believers in Jesus Christ. Be equally yoked in your Christian living by both the husband and the wife walking with the Lord and striving to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. When the husband and the wife are equally yoked in both of these ways, there is the boundless blessing of the involvement and participation by the God of the universe in the marriage relationship, and the couple has the treasure of the very knowledge, wisdom and Word of God as their guides for marriage. The closer the husband and the wife come to the Lord, the closer they will be to each other. The more the husband and the wife love the Lord, the more they will love each other. It is your **CHOICE**.

## Chapter Four

### VITAL PRAYER

Do you pray for your spouse every day? I submit that you cannot say that you are doing all you need to do to enhance your marriage if you are not committed to praying for your spouse every day and actually doing so. The purpose of this book is not to discuss prayer in itself (I do direct your attention to Appendix F (page 184) which outlines my prayer notebook). I will say, however, that one of the greatest mysteries in the life of a Christian is that the all-sufficient, all-powerful God who created you and me has made a way for us to communicate with Him, and that He desires that we do so. On top of that wonder, add the efficacy of prayer. The God who invites us to exercise the family privilege of making our requests known to our heavenly Father, is the very God who listens and answers prayer. Fantastic and wonderful, isn't it?

We are very limited, but God is unlimited. There is so much that we do not know, but God knows everything. We can only be in one place at a time, but God is everywhere at once. You cannot know every inner thought of your spouse, but God knows every need, desire, feeling and thought. There are so many things that are not in our control. There are countless things that are "impossible" from a human standpoint. Yet the Lord himself stated that, "with God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26; and see Appendix G listing some of the Characteristics of God, page 187).

I mention these things as a foundation to introduce the necessity for and efficacy of praying for your spouse. Another mystery that has been revealed to me through years of praying is that persistent, fervent prayer for another person develops an increasing capacity of the pray-er to better understand how to effectively pray for that person, and it gives a heightened sensitivity to and ability to understand the visions, dreams and needs that well up from the inside of that other person. When one meets that person at the throne of grace, it is a very REAL encounter and it is something God uses to draw the pray-er closer to that person in mind and heart.

These mysterious dynamics about intercessory prayer are the most true with respect to husbands and wives. The best start of a day in the relationship is to pray for your spouse. Focusing on the needs and spiritual growth of your spouse helps set a tone for the day. As your relationship with your spouse deepens there will be an ever increasing ability to effectively pray for your spouse. By taking the needs and benefits for your spouse to the Lord, you are seeking the greatest and highest assistance possible for your spouse.

Pray? You say, "Of course I should pray for my spouse." Right. But are you doing so? Failure in this area is no less than neglect. You are not really serious about having a happy and God-honoring marriage if you are not praying for your spouse.

I have discussed praying **for** your spouse. The other significant part is praying **with** your spouse. The most intimate spiritual act is prayer. Your most intimate relationship is with your spouse. By praying together the Lord has fertile ground to beautifully blend your dreams, visions, plans and hopes. When you are praying together you are united in heart and spirit before the Lord. An aspect of "praying without ceasing" is the constant awareness of the Lord's presence, His ability to help, and the constant availability of God to hear and answer prayers.

**It's Your CHOICE – Vital Prayer**

One of the beautiful aspects of the Christian marriage that is not (and cannot be) a part of a non-Christian marriage, is the spiritual dimension. You and your spouse can jointly approach your Maker about matters of concern. Along with your recognition of mutual dependence between you and your spouse is the recognition that the two of you are fully dependent on the Lord day-by-day. Praying together is effective and necessary. As a wonderful byproduct, praying together is a relationship enhancer and a beautiful reminder of the unity that exists between God, the husband, and the wife.

## Chapter Five

### BE A GIVER . . . NOT A GETTER

We can easily understand the difference between one who is a **giver** and one who is a **getter** (aka a taker). By definition the direction of the benefit from the activity of the **giver** flows from the **giver** to another. The opposite is true for the **getter**. The direction of the benefit is toward the **getter** himself or herself. But notice that both the **giver** and the **getter** are doing the action. The **giver** and the **getter** are both making **CHOICES**. The **giver** chooses to direct a benefit from himself/herself to another. The **getter** chooses to obtain a benefit to himself/herself from another source.

Here is a simple question. Which person is more selfish, the **giver** or the **getter**? The answer is obvious. Here's a more difficult question. Which are you – a **giver** or a **getter**? If both you and your spouse are **givers** then you are in all likelihood going to develop a wonderful marriage relationship, and the other principles in this book are going to fit very neatly and easily. The person who is the **giver** is imitating the character of God the Father and of the Lord Jesus Christ. Indeed, we Christians are the ones who can truly understand and appreciate the gifts of God.

Allow me to list some portions of Scripture which reveal that God is a **giver**, and that God's direction for us is to be **givers**.

#### **Proverbs 11:24-25**

One man gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty. A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed.

#### **Proverbs 21:26b**

All day long [the sluggard] craves for more, but the righteous give without sparing.

#### **Proverbs 22:9a**

A generous man will himself be blessed . . .

#### **Matthew 10:8b** (Jesus speaking)

. . . Freely you have received, freely give.

#### **John 3:16** (Jesus speaking)

For God so loved the world that He gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.

#### **John 10:28** (Jesus speaking)

I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of My hand.

#### **John 14:15-17** (Jesus speaking)

## It's Your CHOICE – Be A Giver . . . Not A Getter

If you love Me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counselor to be with you forever – the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept Him, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. But you know Him, for He lives with you and will be in you.

**John 14:27** (Jesus speaking)

Peace I leave with you; My peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

**John 17:2** (Jesus' prayer to the heavenly Father, speaking of Himself)

For you granted Him authority over all people that He might give eternal life to all those you have given Him.

**Acts 20:35b**

. . . remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

**Romans 6:23**

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**Romans 8:32**

He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all – how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things?

**II Corinthians 8:8-9**

I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

**II Corinthians 9:14-15**

And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you because of the surpassing grace God has given you. Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!

**Ephesians 2:8-9**

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast.\* \* \* \* \*

There is not one aspect of the relationship between you and your spouse which is not touched by your continuing **CHOICE** of whether you will be a **giver** or a **getter**. For example, think about how this important choice will play out in the following areas: Fulfilling Scriptural roles in marriage; your thought life; your dreams and goals; your financial planning and spending; the

### It's Your CHOICE – Be A Giver . . . Not A Getter

use of your time; the selection of activities for recreation; your priorities; your sexual relations; and . . . (you fill in the blank).

Previously I stated that if both the husband and wife are **givers** there is an excellent atmosphere and environment for a happy and excellent marriage. I cannot prove the following two conclusions, but my experience tells me that these are true: (1) if both the husband and the wife are **getters** there is very little chance that there will be a happy and God-honoring marriage; (2) if one spouse is a **getter** and the other spouse is a **giver** the marriage relationship may make it, but it is unlikely that the relationship will be happy, and the degree to which the marriage can be God-honoring will be stunted. I urge you . . . No, I beg you . . . to be a **giver** and to not be a **getter** in your marriage.

In a different context the Bible tells us that “God loves a cheerful **giver**” (II Corinthians 9:7b regarding giving to the Lord). While admittedly taking this passage out of context, let me suggest to you that if you are a **giver** rather than a **getter** in your marriage you will indeed be a cheerful **giver** because the more you give in the relationship with your spouse, the more freedom you will have in your inner spirit and the greater the chance you will reflect that giving spirit. As you bless and benefit your spouse you will indeed receive rich blessings and benefits in the form of a happier and more beautiful relationship and increased day-to-day enjoyment of each other.

I challenge you to apply the distinction between a **giver** and a **getter** to all of the topics and principles presented throughout the rest of this book. You will see that your **CHOICE** to be a **giver** is a choice in each case to enhance your marriage.

## Chapter Six

### A LIST OF ABSOLUTES FOR MUTUAL COMMITMENT

You will certainly agree that marriage is infinitely more than a list of do's and don'ts. Yet one of the problems these days is that so many couples fail or refuse to acknowledge important do's and don'ts, and these couples do not make or fulfill important commitments and promises. Do you want a happy and God-honoring marriage? Then I suggest that you make the following commitments before the Lord and that you verbally express these commitments to your spouse (yes, eyeball to eyeball, and over again regularly).

1. I will always choose to love you.
2. I will always be absolutely honest with you.
3. I will never divorce you.
4. I will never abandon you.
5. I will never have sex with anyone but you.
6. I will never touch any person besides you in a sexual or romantic way.
7. I will pray for you every day.
8. I will never hit you, slap you, punch you, or in any way touch you violently or with the intention of causing you pain.
9. I will never yell at you, talk harshly to you, or say anything to you with an intention of hurting you or cutting you down. I will never call you a demeaning name.
10. I will always support you and nurture you.
11. I will always keep you and our relationship as being more important and of higher priority than any relationship with anyone else; and I will not cause you to suffer competition for my time and attention with any other friend or associate of mine.
12. I will remain open for you to constructively alert me of mistakes I am making or wrongs I have committed.
13. I will do everything I can to assist you in developing your talents, gifts and abilities and in reaching your highest potential.
14. I will immediately and always come to your defense.
15. I will do everything I can to make and keep our home as a safe harbor, a refuge, an oasis and a happy place to be.
16. I will do my best to be a **giver** rather than a **getter** (aka taker) in all aspects of our marriage.
17. When I am with others or in public I will never cut you down, ridicule you, demean you, or make you the object of any joke.
18. When I am with others or in public I will always support you, honor you and uphold you.
19. I will never break our confidences, and I will never share with others about our intimacy or our private matters.
20. I will do everything I can to contribute to a happy and God-honoring marriage relationship.

Make these commitments to each other and before the Lord. **CHOOSE** to KEEP these commitments. Reaffirm all of these commitments to each other regularly.

## **Chapter Seven**

### **ALWAYS HONOR YOUR SPOUSE**

Always honor your spouse. There is the positive aspect of honoring your spouse, and there is the negative aspect of what you must refrain from doing as you carry out your commitment to always honor your spouse. These will be discussed separately.

I believe that much of the tension that comes from the battle over the Ephesians Chapter 5 instructions and the God-proclaimed roles for husbands and wives is total nonsense. By the point that you are asserting those verses to your spouse, you two are well beyond the obedience zone. A very simple fact is this. The husband cannot be the head of a happy marriage if the wife is “submitting” to him only because of forced subservience or because of a husband’s demand of allegiance. Similarly, if the wife has affirmative intentions to disregard the husbands thoughts and requests, whether by direct challenge or by manipulation, there cannot be an atmosphere of peace in the relationship. If you and your spouse are engaged in a continuing “king of the mountain” struggle, then there is little hope for a truly happy marriage.

At the very start of your marriage you should make the commitments listed in Chapter 6. In fact, these are the types of commitments that should be repeated and expressed openly in the presence of your children as they are growing up so that your children will be happily secure in the stability and commitment of their parents’ marriage, and so that your children will understand the reality of the inviolate commitments involved in marriage.

#### **(1) HONORING YOUR SPOUSE (THE DO’S)**

Years ago I made a decision that I was going to try to use a positive or complimentary adjective to attach to the name of my precious wife and to the names of my dear children whenever I would say their names in conversation with others. I decided that in this simple way I would have a vehicle to regularly express to others how I honor my family members and also I would have a very regular reminder to myself about how wonderful “my three girls” are. Whether I am speaking to a clerk in a store, a waitress, a person in business, or anyone else, I try to say something like “my precious wife” instead of saying “my wife.” Or I may say “my beautiful Pam.” I do not add a positive adjective absolutely every time that I mention her name. But I can safely say that a very high majority of the time I do so. After years of following this simple practice I can absolutely say that attaching a positive adjective to the name of your spouse when speaking to others is a significant enhancer of the marriage relationship. I know how it affects me daily, and I know that it is a regular and powerful statement to my wife and to others about the high esteem I have for my dear wife.

Honoring your spouse to others includes other aspects of communication. Just as the terrible act of putting your spouse down to others damages the relationship, so your positive actions and words to express honor of your spouse will enhance your marriage.

Do not be ashamed for others to know that you love your spouse and that your spouse is the most important person to you in the entire world. Be sure that you have a picture of your spouse

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as the first picture in your billfold. Make certain that you have a picture of your spouse on your dresser at home and on your desk or station at work. These pictures give you the blessing of a constant reminder of your spouse. They also give you a reminder to be thinking about and praying for your spouse throughout the day. They also are a tangible statement **to** your spouse that you are happy to show the world that you belong to your spouse and that you have no reservation or embarrassment about others seeing and knowing that you are in love. The display of pictures of your spouse also has an impact on others. When others see those photographs they will develop the proper understanding of you as a happily married person and they will not have incorrect or harmful expectations for or about you.

When someone request that you participate in something that conflicts with your plans to do something with your spouse, take the opportunity to honor your spouse and your marriage. Instead of simply declining, or answering generally that you have other plans, say something like, “That sounds great, but I already have that time reserved to go on a walk with the most important person in my life, my precious wife.”

When is the last time you *planned* specific words of honor, praise or appreciation for you to express to your spouse the next time you are alone? You like to receive compliments, so compliment your spouse. You like to receive praise, so praise your spouse. You like to be thanked and appreciated so show and express your appreciation to your spouse.

When you are with your spouse be sure that your words, actions, expressions and your non-verbal communications all express honor and respect for your spouse. Instead of taking your spouse for granted, your spouse must remain as the most important person in the world to you. Think of the most famous and acclaimed person you know of. Think of how you would honor that person. Then make sure that your honor your spouse even more so.

This principle of honoring your spouse to others is not anything terribly profound. It will only happen, however, if you **CHOOSE** to do it, and then you carry through. **DO IT!** Remember . . . always, always, always honor and affirm your spouse when he or she is mentioned or discussed with others as well as when you interact with your spouse.

### **(2) HONORING YOUR SPOUSE (THE DON'TS)**

You must promise and covenant that you will not say disparaging or derogatory remarks to or about your spouse. This includes the conversation between you and your spouse, and it includes conversation with others.

When each spouse is totally committed not to cut down, belittle, or ridicule the other spouse and not to verbally attack the other spouses, those types of “little foxes” that could develop into marriage war will be avoided.

If one looks at the instruction given by God that the husband is to love his wife as his own body (Ephesians 5:28), one can see the logic of not cutting down or putting down his wife. Furthermore God declares that the husband and wife are “one flesh” (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:5; Mark 10:8; I Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 5:31). You would not take a knife and slice your

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face to shreds. You would not take an ice pick and plunge it into your eyeball. Remember, you and your spouse are “one flesh,” so anything you do which is hurtful to your spouse, is in fact hurtful to you.

Often words have the power to create deeper and more painful wounds than sickness or physical injury. Once the words are spoken they are put into another person’s memory and even after the initial sting is gone, memory cells have been filled up with those words and there may never be a “healing” like there will be with a physical laceration or abrasion. Bitter words can lead to arguments, which in turn may lead to damage to the relationship and the loss of many other joys and benefits.

Applying the “one flesh” reality, it does not take a great amount of imagination to see how such cutting words are not only destructive to the other person and to the relationship, but they are actually also self-destructive and self-defeating. That being true, why would one spouse say evil or hurtful things to the other? Ultimately it has to be rooted in the sin of selfishness. It is the “I want it MY way” or “I will show you who ultimately will be boss,” or “I am the greater and you are the lesser.” It is very gutless to seek to elevate oneself by putting another down. Regrettably this occurs even with some Christian couples. It is those Christian couples who put each other down, or verbally attack each other, which experience difficulties in their marriage relationships and disharmony in the home. I repeat, commit one to another that you will not under any circumstance send hurtful verbal missiles at each other. Don’t do it.

You have probably had the experience of being in a group when someone decides to make fun of a spouse or to make a spouse the brunt of a joke or ridicule. Perhaps you have heard a person share to someone outside of the family a matter that may be funny, but it is embarrassing to the other spouse that anyone outside of the family would ever hear about it. In those contexts there may be laughing and smiling when the tale is told . . . but it is **NOT** funny. The speaker is committing acts of dishonor and disloyalty which most certainly will harm the warmth of the marriage relationship. Such “banter” has no place in a Christian relationship. Because the marriage relationship is the highest human relationship created by God, such public ridicule of a spouse or of the marriage relationship actually impugns the character of our Lord Jesus Christ who compared the relationship between Himself and the church to that of a marriage couple (Mark 2:19-20; John 3:29; Ephesians 5:22-32; Revelation 21:2, 9-10).

The Christian husband and the Christian wife will be plagued with the “natural man” until they step into heaven. Much of what I will have to say in this book depends upon each spouse’s personal relationship with the Lord and how diligently that individual is actively pursuing the goal of growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. What do you do when there is a difference of opinion or something happens that leads to you being irritated with your spouse? Applying the commitment that you will not put down, tear down, ridicule, or verbally attack your spouse, sometimes you decide that the best response at the time is NO RESPONSE (yes, despite some of the modern advocacy that open communication means that you say *anything* that is on your mind or that you talk with your spouse about absolutely *everything*, I really am saying that often you just keep your mouth shut and let it ride and forget it). If you feel that you have some emotion about the matter and that it is appropriate for discussion, by all means wait until the emotional climate is very calm. Then talk about it without

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using any words that are condescending or a put down of your spouse. If you sense that you are having some inner feelings of anger or disgust toward your spouse, be all the more vigilant to hold your tongue (the “shut-up” principle) and wait to speak

What we are talking about is first a **CHOICE** to make a commitment never to say anything disparaging or derogatory to or about your spouse, followed by a series of **CHOICES** in the application of that commitment concerning the verbal exchanges to or about your spouse (and the same applies to tones, attitudes, facial expressions, and physical interaction with your spouse).

If you are one on one with a friend and that friend makes a joke about his or her spouse or demeans his or her spouse, there are a couple of responses that should be made, depending on your relationship with that person. If it is a close Christian friend who puts down his or her spouse, then you will be a faithful friend by saying something like this. “I assume that you are not intending to hurt your wife. But when you make a joke that puts her down, it immediately causes me to be uncomfortable. The Lord tells us to love our wife. My wife and I have a commitment that we will honor and respect each other to the point that we will not put each other down and we will not make fun of the other in public or with a third party. That loyalty and commitment pays big dividends in our relationship, and I would urge you in love to consider such a practice in your marriage. It just is very uncomfortable for me to hear a Christian make fun of or put down his wife.”

If you do not have a close relationship with the person, then perhaps the only thing that can be done is to very obviously refrain from joining in the levity. If it continues at all, walking away from the conversation may be the best action to take. It is not healthy for a Christian to even give the appearance of approval or participation by laughing along with such other person who is violating principles of honoring his or her spouse.

In summary, never put down, tear down, cut down, demean, make fun of or ridicule your spouse when speaking to him or her, or in any type of verbal exchange with an outside party. It is your **CHOICE**. **CHOOSE** to always honor your spouse.

## Chapter Eight

### MARRIAGE IS PERMANENT FOR LIFE

The commitment in marriage must be irreversible.

In my law practice, I decline to represent clients in divorce cases. We are all aware of the statistics which show that more and more marriages end in divorce. My heart grieves at the fact there is an increasing incidence of divorce in Christian marriages. This is not right. Divorce is NOT God's way. God created man, and God created woman. God created marriage, and it is God's perfect will that the couple will never get a divorce.

“That from the beginning of creation God made them male and female. For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh: consequently they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate” (Mark 10:6-9; Matthew 19:4-6; Genesis 1:27; 2:24; 5:2). **God hates divorce** (Malachi 2:16). God made the marriage relationship the highest and holiest human relationship. As previously shared, God uses the marriage illustration in explaining the relationship between Jesus Christ and the Christian church (Revelation 21:2, 9). Please do not diminish the high sanctity that God Himself places upon the marriage relationship, by ever even thinking that divorce could be an option.

The marriage ceremony itself contains the **marriage vows**. A **promise** is made by the husband to God that the husband will remain married and faithful to his wife for life. The wife makes a **promise** to God that she will remain married and faithful to her husband for life. The husband **promises** the wife that he will remain married and faithful to the wife for life. The wife **promises** to the husband that she will remain married and faithful to the husband for life. **THESE ARE SACRED PROMISES. THE HUSBAND HAS GIVEN HIS WORD. THE WIFE HAS GIVEN HER WORD.** Why is that not enough by itself? Do not break a promise to God! Do not break a promise to your spouse! Do not trash your own integrity before God or before your mate by being unfaithful or by terminating the marriage relationship.

God treats vows very seriously. God expects that when vows are made to the Lord, the person will fulfill them. The Bible declares that God requires the person to keep the vow and that it is sin for one to violate a vow once it has been given (see Deuteronomy 23:21-23; Psalm 50:14; 61:8; 76:11; 1:14, 16, 18; Ecclesiastes 5:4).

A number of years ago I listened to a tape recording of a message delivered by Pastor Stuart Briscoe of Elm Brook Church in the greater Milwaukee area. He gave a word picture which has stuck with me and which I believe is very profound and accurate in describing how, from the very first instant of marriage and throughout life, the couple must appreciate the commitment involved in marriage and the permanency of the marriage relationship. Pastor Briscoe stated in substance the following:

When the husband and the wife get married they voluntarily enter into the marriage room. Once inside they see that there is only one means of departure from the marriage room which is a door

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clearly marked “fire escape” with a key visibly protruding from the lock of the door. Because of the commitment to the Lord and to each other the husband and wife join hands and walk directly to the fire escape door, turn the key until the lock is fully and firmly engaged, and then together they remove the key and destroy it. From that point forward they both know that there is absolutely no option of either person to leave the marriage room. Because of that agreement and knowledge, whenever there is the scent of smoldering fire or even an outbreak of fire within the marriage room, neither party takes a step toward the fire escape. That option was totally and permanently removed. Instead, they immediately concentrate their attention and joint efforts to putting out the fire.

Pastor Briscoe’s illustration is so true. In the Christian marriage, the husband and the wife are **TOTALLY UNITED**. God has joined the husband and wife together. **NO** person (not the wife herself or the husband himself) is to tear asunder the marriage relationship. For one spouse to sever that unity is in fact an act of self-mutilation and self-inflicted pain. By contrast, the most sensible and logical thing for you is to please and to build up your spouse and to work to preserve and enhance the marriage.

If the husband and wife will in fact put away forever any thought that the marriage relationship can end short of death, there is great security in the relationship. That knowledge and security give the couple the freedom to give to each other without reservation. They are really free to dream and plan together knowing that such dreams and plans cannot be and will not be short circuited by either of them moving toward the fire escape . . . there is no fire escape. **THE MARRIAGE IS FOR LIFE**. Remember, it is your **CHOICE**.

## Chapter Nine

### AS HEAD OF THE FAMILY THE HUSBAND IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE QUALITY OF THE MARRIAGE

Husband, it is your responsibility to insure an excellent marriage. Wait a minute, you say. That can't be right, can it? Yes. I think men had better be very clear about their accountability to God. Much of this book is about **CHOICES** for both spouses to make, and principles for each spouse to follow. In this chapter I am now addressing the reality that when Christians stand before the Lord one day to give an account, the husband will be the one held responsible for his own actions, **plus** those of his wife, in how they individually and as a couple, obeyed God's Scriptural dictates. To be sure the wife is and will be responsible before God for all of her choices, but she will not also carry the same accountability for her husband.

According to God, the husband, and the husband alone, has the position and responsibility as HEAD of the wife. There is no room for the husband to make excuses, and there is no place for the husband to point fingers at the wife. If the wife is not walking with the Lord, the man will stand before God as accountable for that. If the children are out of order, the man will stand accountable for that before God. That is a fearful and awesome reality (I Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 5:22).

With that kind of responsibility, doesn't it make a lot of sense for the man to choose to draw upon every bit of assistance and counsel that he can get. My observation is that the man who is effective as the head of his home does not wear that position as a title or a badge, but is humbled by the omniscient eyes of the God who will require him to give an account. The successful husband is the one who knows his constant need for God's help and guidance. (II Corinthians 3:4-6). He is a man of prayer. He habitually draws upon the Lord's instruction in God's Word. Furthermore, those successful heads of the wife are those who seek out and value their wife's input, wisdom, position and perspective.

Years ago I was a Navy lawyer (JAG) stationed at the Naval Legal Service Office, Naval Station, Norfolk, Virginia. A crisis pitch developed in our large law center when there was a ship collision and the captain of the naval vessel was court-marshaled. At the time of the accident the commanding officer ("CO") had been in bed during his normal time for sleep. Under military law and Navy protocol the skipper of the vessel was in fact fully responsible for everything that occurred on the ship.

Even if the C.O. of the ship had properly delegated duties to the executive officer ("X.O.") or some other subordinated officer, the C.O. remains accountable for that delegation of authority and for all that is done by every person on his ship. Furthermore the higher naval authority looks to the C.O. to account for the Navy ship. The executive officer of the ship is second in command and has very high responsibilities. It is necessary that the X.O. be highly trained and diligent in fulfilling his duties. In the absence of the C.O. the X.O. is in command. Certainly there are times when the X.O. of the ship is smarter and more competent than C.O. Such competence or aptitude does not change the order of authority that is established by military law. Nor does it

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change the accountability of the C.O. to the higher authorities. Neither the commanding officer nor the executive officer is ever free to modify the military law or the chain of command established by the higher Navy authorities.

This analogy is not a complete or perfect parallel to the roles for husbands and wives established by God. But it does give a helpful picture of the accountability of the husband to God and the responsibility of both the husband and the wife to accept and fulfill the roles and responsibilities established and declared by the higher authority – God Himself. The “law” and the “orders,” as well as the full instruction manual for marriage is the Bible - God’s holy, perfect and inerrant Word.

I do not believe I need to belabor this point. The reality is that the husband is the head of the wife, and that God has made the husband to be responsible for the quality of the marriage. The husband dare not neglect or misuse his role and responsibility of being head of his wife. Being the leader gives no room for the husband to be a tyrant or a dictator. There is only one dictator allowed – Almighty God Himself.

Husband, **CHOOSE** to be the godly head of your wife and family – in constant obedience to the Word of God and in dependence upon your Heavenly Father.

## Chapter Ten

### TOTAL EQUALITY IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

God created man and woman. God created marriage. God's Word gives us axiomatic truth. We are not at liberty to add to or take away from God's truth. Nor shall we assault the omniscient God by questioning His truth. God's truth is true and there is no debate.

God's Word established the truth that God created man and woman as *EQUALS*. Neither the male race nor the female race is smarter than the other. Neither the male race nor the female race is better or stronger than the other (although there may be some disparities in physical strength favoring men, or in the ability to withstand pain favoring women, or other differences in certain aspects of bodily strength). Women are as mentally tough as men. Neither the male race nor the female race is more important to society.

Being equal, however, is not tantamount to being **identical**. I once heard someone say that "Anyone who thinks that the only difference between men and women is the plumbing, is nuts." Herein lies one of the beauties of the marriage relationship. There should not be any type of turf war or battle of the sexes. Instead there is the wonderful opportunity for the husband and wife to **compliment** each other so that each is of greater capability and is wiser because of the counsel with the other, than if each were going it alone. This seems basic and simple, but unless each spouse respects the other's worth and equality, the couple will not appropriate this advantage. Just as each individual is unique in his or her combination of talents, gifts, abilities, and the like, so each couple has a unique combination of talents, gifts, abilities, and the like, so that each couple has a unique combination of the same. In God's wondrous orchestration each couple has the capacity to develop into the whole unity that God planned when He brought the two together.

Rather than the difference of the sexes being a point of conflict, it should be a life long inquiry and blessing. In my heart I really do care about people. However, one of my areas of weakness is that I am slower to perceive people's feelings and hurts. By contrast my precious wife is especially sensitive and perceptive. By respecting Pam as my equal I can seek her perspective and perceptions without in any way diminishing my value. Similarly, I have an open door for her to inform me about needs and feelings of those around me that she sees and feels, but to which I simply am unaware.

If the husband truly knows and believes in his inner being that his wife is fully his equal, then he is less likely to misapply Scriptural instructions concerning the headship of the man and the submission of the woman. If the wife accords her husband full equality, there is less likelihood of disrespect, resentment, conflict, or manipulation. It seems to me that if true equality is **CHOSEN**, understood, spoken, and re-affirmed by both, then conflict is minimized and the ultimate questions of "who is going to make the final decision" or "who is to submit to whom" will not often arise. I do not believe there has ever been a time when I have proclaimed that because I am the head of my wife, I insist or require that something be done my way. I have never tried to demand or force my precious Pam to submit to me or to respect me. We know our roles and we fit well together. We are true equals – with understood roles and responsibilities.

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When such equality in the marriage relationship is affirmatively considered, it brings you to the conscious recognition of the worth of your spouse and to the fresh understanding of the infinite value of your spouse to you.

Here is a word of emphasis from the negative side. When either the husband or the wife takes a spoken or unspoken position of superiority in worth, it will be destructive to growth in the relationship and may ultimately be destructive to the relationship itself. Each of us has weaknesses, limitations, flaws and faults. If one spouse decides to dwell upon the faults or weaknesses of the other spouse, there will always be something to pick at or be dissatisfied with.

It is your **CHOICE** to NOT dwell upon the imperfections of your spouse. Why not instead remember what caused you to fall in love with your spouse in the first place. Most likely those qualities and aspects of your spouse are still in place. **CHOOSE** to concentrate on those things and remember that your spouse is your **equal**. God says so (see I Peter 3:7 which reveals that if the husband fails to recognize his wife as a **joint heir** in Christ, his prayers will be hindered).

Chapter 16 **A Partnership** addresses in some detail the equality of the husband and wife in some other areas, including finances. **Equality** does not require that the husband and wife be clones of each other. When equality is understood there is a freedom to be different and to effectively compliment each other.

I Corinthians 12:12-31 relates to the Christian church, and how the body of Christ works with many parts. I fully recognize that this portion of Scripture does not apply directly to the husband and wife relationship. I do submit, however, that when both the husband and wife are true Christians, they are each parts of the body. I would like for you to consider how this instruction to the church does indeed give guidance for practical application in your marriage. On the wedding day the husband *part* and the wife *part* became “one flesh.” The couple is formed into one body (I Corinthians 12:12). The husband and wife may have different roles, duties, and employment, and they may have differing talents, gifts, strengths, experience and abilities, but neither can say that the other is unnecessary or inferior. Both the husband and the wife are “indispensable” to the marriage unit.

Consider specifically verses 24b through 27 of I Corinthians 12. “But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that **each part should have equal concern for each other**. If one part suffers, every part suffers with; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.”

The principles of these verses apply to your marriage. They also help to understand and appreciate that both the husband and the wife, as parts of the marriage body, are **equal**.

You must continue to **CHOOSE** to accord your spouse true equality with you and you must **CHOOSE** to manifest that equality in your actions, countenance words and attitudes.

## **Chapter Eleven**

### **LOYALTY**

The full appreciation and understanding of the unity in marriage is foundational to there being genuine **loyalty in the relationship**. The verbal attack on your spouse is a verbal attack on your joint being and therefore an attack on yourself. It is the same for a physical attack, a failure to nurture, a failure to please, etc. The positive corollary is that a **CHOICE** to keep your mouth shut when tempted to say something against your spouse is a protection of your joint being and therefore a benefit to yourself. Furthermore the deliberate pleasuring, benefiting and delighting of your spouse will benefit your joint being and therefore it will ultimately also benefit you. Those reasons provide a logical and practical basis for **loyalty**, but there is much more.

Add to those realities the **CHOICE** to love your spouse and the **CHOICE** to obey the Lord's commands for speech, behavior, attitude, roles and responsibilities in marriage and you have an irrefutable case for absolute **loyalty**. Loyalty is a very, very big matter. Indeed, loyalty is a major component in a very successful, healthy, happy and God-honoring marriage.

Your commitment to your spouse must include a commitment to be **loyal** in the following ways: (1) physical/sexual fidelity to your spouse; (2) romantic affections solely for your spouse; (3) emotional dependence only upon your spouse; (4) keeping your confidences and private matters absolutely confidential and private; (5) always and immediately defending the person, character and reputation of your spouse; (6) always honoring your spouse and refusing to put down or demean your spouse; (7) always being united with your spouse in all communications with your children and in disciplining your children; (8) keeping your spouse, rather than anyone else, as your confidante; (9) assisting, encouraging and promoting your spouse to reach his or her full potential.

#### **(1) Loyalty: physical/sexual fidelity to your spouse**

This is obvious in light of the clear Scriptural commands not to commit adultery (Exodus 20:14; Deuteronomy 5:18; Leviticus 20:10; Matthew 15:19; Romans 7:2-3; James 2:11; II Peter 2:14). The serious Christian will do well to study and re-study the instruction of Jesus in Matthew 5:28 wherein Christ declared the truth that if a man lusts after a woman he has committed adultery in his heart. There is no room for messing around in this area. It is a huge tragedy if a Christian neglects the daily maintenance of a fresh walk with the Lord. Such neglect results in a dulling to the Holy Spirit's warnings. This is really dangerous. It can lead to hitting the top of the slippery slope of entertaining lust, which can lead to what is wrongly perceived to be innocent advances, which is but a sinful choice away from diving down into the cesspool of adultery itself (Proverbs 21:16). I remember an expression that I heard back before I became a Christian. Someone said, "It does not matter where you get your appetite as long as you eat at home." Nothing could be farther from the truth !

The God who created sex, sexual needs, sexual responses, hormones, and all of that, is the Righteous Judge who wisely instructed and warned repeatedly about sexual sins and their consequences. We are to **flee** from youthful lusts (I Corinthians 6:18). There are countless

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Christians littering the roadside of history who fell into sexual sin despite the fact that at one time previously they had a close and vibrant walk with the Lord and they had even at some point resolved to the Lord and to their spouse that they would never, never commit adultery.

There is only one safe area when it comes to physical matters. You must recognize that the old man and the old sinful nature are still in there waiting to raise their ugly heads. (Romans 5:6, 10; 6:6, 19-20; 7:14-25; 8:5-11; Galatians 5:1, 16-21; Titus 1:15; 3:3; James 4:1-2; I John 2:16; I Peter 3:3; II Peter 2:18-19). Today and every day you must spend quality time in the Word of God and in prayer to acknowledge afresh your utter dependence upon the Lord to walk righteously. But be encouraged, if you **CHOOSE** to walk in God's light and to obey God's Word, you will have victory! (I Corinthians 2:16b; 3:16; 5:17; Galatians 5:16, 22-25; 6:16; Ephesians 2:1-4; Colossians 3:8-11; Romans 8:9-11). You need to obtain from the Lord a fresh touch to be strong in recognizing and resisting temptation and in recognizing and taking the ways of escape which the Lord faithfully provides. (Romans 8:6; I Corinthians 10:12-13; 15:34; II Corinthians 10:4-5; Galatians 5:16, 22-25; Ephesians 6:10-18; Philippians 4:8; Titus 2:11-12; James 3:17; I Peter 1:13-16; 2:11) In other words, stay close to the Lord and stay as far away as possible from anything that would be even the slightest step either to the right or to the left from utter and absolute faithfulness and fidelity to your spouse. You should assume that you are too weak in your own strength to allow yourself to ever be in the midst of some erotic or stimulating situation outside of the marriage bedroom. You must **flee** youthful lusts (II Timothy 2:22). You must never try to see how close you can go to the edge of the cliff by wandering off the straight and strict centerline. Keep a close grip on the center line rope and resolve that the only way you can finish the race honoring your spouse and honoring the Lord is to stay right on the center beam depending on the Lord every step of the way.

Every time I hear that another Christian leader has flunked out morally I am reminded about how weak I am in and of myself. Jesus said, "Apart from Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). This is true about all things. When you add the wildcards of sexual impulses and sexual desires to the sinful nature and the tendency to wander, it makes me shutter. We need to daily commit this matter to the Lord, and we need to daily affirm our absolute love, fidelity and loyalty to our spouse. Again we are in areas of **CHOICES**. I do not use the word "balance" in this area at all. There is nothing to balance. You must obey God, and you must be on your guard daily. Everything is weighed totally and absolutely on the side of staying as far away as possible from any deviation from the purity of your exclusive sexual and physical relationship with your spouse.

I want to discuss a related matter. It has to do with physical touching. I recognize that in the Bible we read of greeting one another with a "holy kiss" (Romans 16:16; I Corinthians 10:20; II Corinthians 13:12; I Thessalonians 5:26; I Peter 5:14). There is certainly a place for a Christian hug. I simply say that this is an area where you must be very careful. To the extent you can minimize physical touching among Christians you are staying in a safer zone. I like to reserve my Christian hugs of females for a very controlled and decent hug of the wonderful older ladies in church.

Shortly after I became a Christian I was among some wonderful people who made a practice of giving robust hugs at church. Whenever this happened with a female I would immediately notice

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that her breast were against me. I could not help but have conscious perceptions about the pressing of her breasts to my body. At that time I decided that I simply did not want thoughts about the breasts of other ladies to even go through my brain.

I started using a technique which I recommend to others. If it is appropriate and helpful to give a Christian hug to a female, I employ a very deliberate technique to keep things very decent and honorable. The man should make sure that he controls the situation so that he can make contact with the inside of his elbow area against the shoulders of the lady. Then he squeezes the sides of her shoulders and can thereby give a very strong hug without there ever being contact between his chest and the upper body of the woman. (Frankly, when my lovely daughters began to develop physically I started hugging them this way as a tangible statement to them that their father would continue to generously give them physical hugs, while honoring them and the purity of our relationship by not making any contact with their chests, even while hugging). What this all means is that my sweet Pamela is the only woman I pull tightly against me in a way that her breasts are going to make contact with me.

The woman needs to take special care in this matter of physical contact as well. Because men are excited so easily and quickly, women should not be making physical contact with men. To ladies I strongly suggest that if you make a practice of hugging men in the context of “the Christian hug,” remember that you are potentially creating a stumbling block for that man. I am telling you that the man you hug will perceive and know the nature and extent of your contact. Do not do something that will cause that man to feel your breasts against him which in turn will mean that he will at least for that instant be thinking about your breasts. So **CHOOSE** not to do it. I think that is a pretty simple rule.

Another area of caution has to do with simple touching with your hand. The husband should not touch another woman even as simply as putting his hand on the shoulder, arm or hand of any woman besides his wife (I'm not talking now about touching between parents and children). In the same vein the wife should not so touch a man. God wired us to notice and react to touching.

These things can be so easily misunderstood and you do not want someone of the opposite sex to think that you are making some kind of a flirtation, signal, or amorous contact with him or her. I suggest that you just avoid such touching altogether.

When there is a total loyalty between husband and wife in the area of physical and sexual contact, there is such sweet and abiding security. My darling Pamela has always been faithful to me with the highest degree of fidelity, and I have always been that faithful to her. I am happy that we can say that. With that purity in the relationship there is the freedom of knowing that whether present or absent your spouse is keeping himself or herself truly and solely for you.

### **(2) Loyalty: romantic affections solely for your spouse**

In the preceding category I briefly mentioned lust. Suffice it to say that you must never entertain desires and plans for sex with anyone besides your spouse. Forget the trash that the world promotes about “fantasies.” God would not have commanded us to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ (II Corinthians 10:5) if He had not given us the wherewithal to obey that

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command in dependence upon Him. Simply do not visualize, think about, or desire in you mind any kind of physical or sexual contact with any person other than your spouse.

You need to control your heart as well as your hormones. In order to be loyal to your spouse you must be very careful that you will never direct your **affections** toward anyone besides your spouse. I knew a couple that developed very serious marital problems when one spouse allowed her amorous feelings and affections for her husband to grow cold, while at the same time directing those feelings toward a different man. This was a Christian couple and the woman rationalized that since she never had sexual contact or sexual activity with that other man and since she was resolved to remain married to her husband, then there was no sin. In other words, she made the **CHOICE** to withdraw her affections from her husband and to direct those affections toward another man. **That was an act of great disloyalty.** You are the one who makes the **CHOICE** about where you direct your affections. You **CHOOSE** whether you will release and freely give your affections fully toward your spouse or whether you will withhold those affections. Do not withhold your affections from you spouse, and by all means make the **CHOICE** that you will not for one second direct any amorous feelings, thoughts or affections toward anyone besides your spouse.

I suggest that the best way to remain loyal in this area is for you every day to consciously and affirmatively plan how to give your full affections to your spouse. We regularly employ common sense when we plan what we need to buy before going to the store. We prepare our shopping list before going to the grocery store. Before we visit the hardware store to get materials for a project we figure out what all we need to buy. Similarly, we consider it to be good organization to plan through a prioritized “to-do” list for the day. Yet we often fail to affirmatively pray for, plan for and prioritize things pertaining to the family, including how we can give our unrestricted affection today to our spouse. Why not start such prayerful daily planning right now.

### **(3) Loyalty: emotional dependence only upon your spouse**

When God put husbands and wives together to create a married unit, God made the place where the defensive walls can be let down and where there is the freedom to let your spouse know your innermost feelings, hurts, needs, desires, and goals. The strongest marriages I know of are those wherein each spouse recognizes that he or she **needs** the other. It is not a sign of weakness that you need your spouse. Indeed it is in the recognition of your personal need for your spouse that your marriage unit becomes stronger.

Men, it is okay and in fact it is good, if you develop an emotional dependence upon your wife. Women, it is okay, and indeed good, if you develop an emotional dependence on your husband. I advise that you even tell each other regularly how much you need each other and how much you depend upon each other. It is an act of loyalty to restrict your emotional dependence to be upon your spouse. Certainly each person may have need of third persons, e.g. there may be the need of other counselors. Obviously at work there may be very significant needs for others to be participants. But do not allow those types of interrelationships to develop into an emotional dependence upon anyone besides your spouse.

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The corollary is that it is an act of **disloyalty** for you to allow the development of an emotional dependence upon anyone besides your spouse. You are deluded if you think you can remain sexually pure in act and thought, and keep your affections totally toward your spouse while you allow some type of emotional dependence upon someone of the opposite gender to develop. The one who may at first be an understanding and compassionate friend will not remain only that. It does not work that way. For you to allow your emotions to get involved with that friendly advisor who provides such support is just one step away from allowing your affections to be directed toward that other woman or man and then on down the slippery slope it goes. Do not do it. It is dangerous indeed, and it is an act of disloyalty.

It is safest to make a practice of not being alone with a person of the opposite sex. Be careful to avoid working alone with or sharing free time or recreation with any person of the other sex other than your spouse. Be vigilant to **CHOOSE** to restrict your emotional dependence to your spouse.

### **(4) Loyalty: keeping your confidences and private matters absolutely confidential and private**

Perhaps it should go without saying that you must keep confidential those things which your spouse *requests* that you keep confidential, and that you must keep confidential those things about your marriage and about your spouse which obviously you *should* keep confidential. Unfortunately, there are many Christians who do not keep such confidential and private matters totally between themselves and their spouse. Instead they blab it to some friend or some counselor or some prayer partner. Countless private, secret and confidential matters have been wrongly disclosed to someone other than a spouse in the name of sharing a “prayer request.” No matter how much you love, respect and trust some other third party, if you shared such confidential and private matters with that third party you have violated the trust of your spouse and you have been **disloyal**.

Here are some practical effects of such disloyalty. If you are willing to share confidential and private matters with a third party, then in the back of your mind you may be unable to have a certainty that your spouse will keep such matters truly private and confidential. If you allow private and confidential matters to go outside to a third party it is virtually inevitable that there will be violations by such third parties despite their “promises” not to tell. And with all certainty there will be a time when it will come back to your spouse and your spouse will discover that confidential and private matters have been shared to a third party by you. That is explosive.

There are laws and rules of ethical conduct that require confidentiality between certain types of persons, e.g. attorney-client, pastor-church member, etc. There are serious consequences if that confidentiality is breached. We would immediately recognize that such breach of confidentiality is unprofessional, unethical, and it will most certainly damage the relationship between those two. The marriage relationship is far more important. The need for trust in communication between spouses is ever so much higher than in those other said relationships. Guard those confidences, secrets and private matters with your life. It is that important. Do not rationalize an exception to such loyalty to your spouse.

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### **(5) Loyalty: always and immediately defending the person, character and reputation of your spouse**

There will come times when someone may say or do something that constitutes a challenge to the person, character, honor, intelligence, or motives of your spouse. An example would be someone saying something or asking a question which clearly indicates that the person is attributing a sinful or bad motive for an action or decision by your spouse. (It is always a sad thing when such assumptions are made, particularly when it is a Christian who is willing to assume a bad motive about another Christian). In order to truly be loyal to your spouse you must immediately defend your spouse in those circumstances. Similarly if someone makes fun of or ridicules your spouse, your silence will not cut it. To be loyal to your spouse you must step in and put an immediate stop to it and refute such ridicule or jesting. If someone does something or says something that in any way communicates that they consider your spouse to be foolish or dumb, you must be ready to jump in and defend your spouse.

I suggest that you and your spouse should promise each other that in the presence of others you will absolutely stand with your spouse and defend your spouse. At the same time you need to have an agreement that if appropriate, when the two of you are alone there will be the freedom to re-visit the matter and to discuss it with all openness. There are sweet dividends to the relationship when spouses commit one to another to remain loyal in sticking up for and defending one another no matter what.

### **(6) Loyalty: always honoring your spouse and refusing to put down or demean your spouse**

This was discussed at length in Chapter 7. I do want to emphasize the fact that this is also a part of loyalty. It most certainly is a destructive act of disloyalty if you put down your spouse or make your spouse the brunt of a joke or ridicule.

### **(7) Loyalty: always being united with your spouse in all communications with your children and in disciplining your children**

This book relates to marriages, rather than parenting. I mention this aspect of loyalty because it really does impact the marriage. I consider a rightly ordered family to be a beautiful thing. I wish that more families in our churches were in order. Unfortunately I have witnessed disloyalty between some parents as they interrelate with their children and as they discipline their children.

Here are some examples of such problems. A child asks one parent about something but he receives an answer he does not like. That child then goes to ask the other parent and receives a different answer that he does like, so he chooses to follow the decision of the second parent. Then when this series of events is revealed, the second parent shrugs it off, or laughs about it, and lets the child get away with such manipulation. In other words, the second parent condones the practice of the child playing one parent off against the other, and the second parent does not support the first parent's decision.

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Another example is when one parent gets into an argument or disagreement with a child. Then the second parent either remains silent and lets the first parent and the child “duke it out,” or even worse, the second parent takes the side of the child in opposition to the first parent.

These examples of bad parenting represent **disloyalty** which is destructive to the marriage relationship. By contrast, when there is loyalty between spouses in parenting and in disciplining children, the relationship between the parents becomes closer and the trust between the two is heightened.

Here is my suggestion. You and your spouse should communicate openly and often about parenting. You should come to agreements about methods of parenting and rules to follow. All of this must be based on the Bible. My experience is that the most successful Christian parents are those who follow the clear and simple dictates set forth by God Himself in Scripture. Be sure that you and your spouse have an agreement for regular feedback and reevaluation of your parenting. Parenting is a learning process and hopefully parents will be learning and growing and becoming better parents step by step. When you and your spouse are loyal to each other in your parenting, you will avoid the frustrations and instability children suffer when they are not given boundaries or when they receive inconsistent parenting from their parents.

There should be an agreement between you and your spouse that you will present totally consistent rules, punishments and direction to your children. Promise to back each other up in communications with your children, whether or not you are both present. Honor your spouse in all communications with your children. Your children should be instructed that it is a very serious offense to even try to play one parent off of the other, and that if they attempt it, the child will not only fail in the attempt, but will be punished for it.

Faithfully carry out your agreement that when one parent has established a rule or has established a consequence for a violation of that rule, the second parent will support that rule and that decision without qualification in communications with or in front of the child. Agree that you will support your spouse in the presence of the child, no matter what. Remember, your children will learn the important principle of **loyalty** by observing the **loyalty** you and your spouse give to each other.

### **(8) Loyalty: keeping your spouse, rather than anyone else, as your confidante**

One of the beauties of the marriage relationship is that your unity is indeed stronger than the sum of the two of you, as you put your heads together and you combine your strengths. No person is without blind spots. Because spouses know each other and have intimate relationship and communications, they are in the ideal position to be the confidante of the other.

Repeatedly God tells us the value of obtaining counsel (Proverbs 11:14; 12:15; 15:22; 19:20; 20:18; 27:9). The one who is in the best position to give you counsel is your spouse and vice versa. The one who should provide the most loving freedom for you to share your most inner thoughts, concerns, fears, dreams and goals, is your spouse.

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You are being **loyal** to your spouse when you make your spouse your confidante. You are being **disloyal** if some other person is your confidante to the exclusion of your spouse.

### **(9) Loyalty: assist, encourage and promote your spouse to reach his or her full potential**

This matter is also touched on in Chapter 15, **Affirmation**. If your marriage relationship is rightly ordered according to Scriptural principles then you will not be threatened by the strengths, developments, and achievements of your spouse. Because the husband and the wife are a unity there is no room for competition or one-upmanship between them.

It is the end of the basketball game. There is no time left on the clock. The score is tied and your teammate is at the free throw line with the victory hanging in the balance. How do you think others would react or think about you if you went over and put your hand in front of your teammate's face just as he was about to complete the shooting stroke of that free throw? Or how do you think they would react if you would shout out, "I'm a better free throw shooter. I should be the one shooting the free throw and getting the glory for the game-winning points." You would be run out of the gym, and you would most certainly be disciplined by your coach.

We can see in that simple illustration the absurdity of one team member trying to do anything to stand in the way of his teammate doing his or her best and succeeding.

To follow through with that same illustration, one should expect that everyone on the team would be supporting and encouraging that free throw shooter to hit the shot and win the game. The result is that the **team** wins when that happens. When the one member succeeds, all the other team members succeed. In marriage your "team" wins when each spouse is doing everything in word, attitude, deed and even facial expressions to actually, and from the heart, encourage the other spouse to succeed, to achieve, to grow, to develop, to blossom, and to use and apply to the fullest and best extent possible all of the wonderful and beautiful talents, abilities, gifts, experiences and aptitudes that exist.

There may be some sacrifices along the way as that happens. One spouse may be taking additional classes or training which puts more of a load for that period on the other spouse. A spouse may need to help out in ways that previously were not necessary. So be it. It is for the team. Remember that when one spouse grows and achieves, the marriage unit grows and achieves. Also, when the two of you pull together and make **CHOICES** together about what steps are necessary to enhance, promote, assist and elevate each spouse, then competition and resentment will not develop.

You should be your spouse's best, most faithful and most enthusiastic **cheerleader**. If your spouse has an activity or presentation, then by all means **BE THERE** ! Even if you need to say "no" to or cancel some other activity. Be there. When you are there you share the experience. When you are there your spouse is encouraged by your presence. You provide very visible and tangible support that simply can never exist from a sincere "do your best, honey" as your spouse goes out the door. Even when your spouse says that it is not important for you to be there and it is okay for you not to be there, be there anyway. This is an aspect of loyalty.

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When you are there to “cheerlead” for your spouse, even when your spouse says that it is trivial and you don’t need to be, you are putting in place, brick-by-brick, a pattern of showing that you want to be there with your spouse and that you will be there with your spouse. This then leads to an abiding knowledge that at times of very serious needs in the future, you and your spouse will be there for each other when needed.

Of course there is the additional benefit from being the faithful and enthusiastic cheerleader for your spouse. **YOU** will receive delight and enjoyment from being there. Because you have an intimate and warm relationship, what is important to your spouse is important to you. It is not just for show that you will be standing alongside and cheering for your spouse at all these times. It is because you **want** to be there and you will enjoy being there supporting, encouraging and cheering on your spouse. There is the delight of having those countless joint experiences which can be discussed and reviewed and laughed about throughout the years to come. When you have been there you will not be limited to receiving and trying to remember a verbal report about how it was, (if such a report would have even been given). You and your spouse will experience it **JOINTLY**.

**CHOOSE** to be loyal to your spouse in every way and always.

## Chapter Twelve

### TRUST

Christians can trust the Lord without reservation. “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and he will make your paths straight [He will direct your paths]” (Proverbs 3:5-6; see also Psalm 25:1; Psalm 56:3-4, 11; Psalm 91:2; John 14:1; Romans 10:11; Hebrews 13:5; I Peter 2:6).

Christians are invited to trust in God who is infinite (I Kings 8:27), perfect (Matthew 5:48; Psalm 18:30), and cannot sin (Psalm 145:17; II Corinthians 5:21; I John 3:5). By contrast each human being – including every husband and every wife – is finite, imperfect, and does sin (Psalm 14:1-3; Romans 3:23). Thankfully, to the extent that we are walking with the Lord and controlled by the Holy Spirit Christians do have the ability to live righteously (Romans 8:5-9).

One of your **CHOICES** will be to actually and without reservation place full trust in your spouse. Another **CHOICE** you will make is that you will remain trustworthy to your spouse (by God's grace and in dependence upon Him). With trust comes profound security and freedom in your relationship with your spouse. There is the freedom from suspicion of your spouse. There is the freedom to always attribute good and right motives to your spouse whether or not you have all of the facts. There is the freedom to know that your spouse will remain true to you in every way.

For example, if a person tells me that they saw my dear wife at some location and there was a man there, I will not worry about Pam's loyalty or fidelity and I will have the relaxed freedom of knowledge that wherever Pam was, under any circumstances with any person, she was doing that which was right and she was definitely not doing anything that would be a breach of my trust. Such trust draws you and your spouse close together.

Through the years I have counseled a number of people who have suffered the agony of learning that their spouse had broken their trust through dishonesty, deception, disloyalty or infidelity. Fortunately I have seen some of those relationships salvaged and restored. I have heard very sincere Christians say that after repentance by the errant spouse they have been able to forgive their spouse and for the most part forget the sin, but they could not seem to muster the unqualified trust that existed before that trust had been broken. I admonish you to remain aware of the fact that if your spouse's trust in you is ever broken, it may be humanly impossible for it ever to be fully and completely restored again. Please be trustworthy. Establish trust and at any cost **CHOOSE** to be trustworthy no matter what. It will be a significant enhancer to your marriage relationship.

## **Chapter Thirteen**

### **HUSBAND BE A MAN. WIFE BE A WOMAN.**

I know that I am not an expert on what makes a man tick versus what makes a woman tick. Indeed, I am the only **ME** I know. Moreover, I know from God's Word that I cannot even fully understand my own heart (Jeremiah 17:9).

I do know that God has established and revealed different roles for husbands and wives. An honest reading of Scripture leads to the conclusion that God Himself intentionally created differences between men and women. Since I am a layman with no recognized expertise or competence in physiology, psychiatry, psychology, genetics or any of the medical fields, what I say in this Chapter outside of Biblical truth should be read as being merely my own perspective. I am going to state some aspects of men and women. I realize that there are wide ranges among men and among women. These are general statements and may not fully apply to each person. The initial and primary purpose of writing this book was to provide advice and suggestions to my two lovely daughters and their husbands. I do feel the liberty to express a father's perspective and a father's advice to his own children. So here goes.

In recent years there has been a push by the media and the entertainment industry to persuade the public to believe a variety of LIES. These are lies against the Word of God and these are lies against nature. Here are some of those LIES in random order:

**Lie #1** The only differences between males and females are their reproductive organs and methods of eliminating waste.

**Lie #2** Males and females have the same psychological and emotion makeup.

**Lie #3** There is no need for men and women to be in any way distinctive in their dress or appearance.

**Lie #4** If males and females could be raised in a pure environment where expectations and influences could be totally controlled, then there would not be any differences seen in the thinking, emotions and behavior of men and women.

**Lie #5** The Bible is not true and the Bible itself is an oppressive document written by men who demean and subordinate women.

That is enough bunk. You can add to that list other lies that are being foisted upon society by misguided and deluded self-proclaimed experts these days. All of said lies are contrary to Scripture. These days some people declare whether something is "politically correct." Political correctness actually is attempted censorship and is blatant extortion – "you do and say what we demand, or you will suffer." That is such a pathetic farce. I ask, whose politics and whose standard of correctness? Forget even trying to be politically correct as defined by the media, special interest groups and radicals. The Word is true and the truth sets you free. Jesus is the

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way, the truth and the life. Truth is not up for a vote. Truth is not subject to an opinion poll. God's truth is true even if all humans would choose to disbelieve it (See Romans 3:3-4).

Back to the differences between men and women. Obviously there are great differences among women themselves and there are great differences among men themselves. Here are some **general** statements about men and women. (I will skip the obvious physical difference between men and women).

Men tend to be active and assertive. Generally males have a greater physical strength than females. Men tend to be more aggressive than females. Men are usually quicker to respond to aggression with a physical reaction than are women. Men are prone to take leadership or even dictatorship. Men are apt to think of the big picture and look down the road to what lies ahead, even missing totally the details and circumstances that are right at his feet.

Women are more likely to perceive and to be sensitive to the situation at hand. Women are generally better at picking up the inner thoughts and positions of a person. Women usually are more emotional than men. Women are better at creating and sustaining relationships than are men. The development of meaningful relationships tends to be more important to a woman than to a man. Women have a more highly developed maternal instinct than a man's paternal instinct (while this does not mean that the father cannot be a devoted and outstanding father, it usually means that the father must regularly make affirmative choices to give attention to matters that the woman gives attention to very naturally and immediately).

Consider **the nest principle**. I have concluded that God has put into women the "nest" instincts, with the nest being the family and the residence for the family. I believe that it is very critical to the woman that all of the sticks in the nest be in order. When a stick is out of order, the woman is unsettled and will not be at peace until that stick is put back into its place or repaired. By contrast the husband may know that a stick of a nest is out of place but he can be undisturbed about it while he goes out to seek food for the family or to search for a different nest location. That same displaced or damaged stick can be the source of great impact, irritation, concern, or frustration to the wife. Meanwhile the husband may not even notice that the stick is out of order and may have no emotion about that particular stick.

Men tend to be more rational and deliberate. A significant part of the self-identity of a man relates to his job, his training and educational background. A significant part of the self-identity of a woman is her set of past and existing relationship, particularly her family. Women are more prone to manipulate than are men. Men are more likely to be inconsiderate than are women. Men are more prone to verbally attack another, while women are more apt to talk about others behind their backs.

Because of a different emotional makeup, and because of the clearly distinctive physical differences of menstrual cycles and related hormonal changes, women tend to have a wider range of reactions, responses, and even personalities, from one time to another. Women tend to be better equipped to appreciate things that men, and women tend to be more expressive of gratitude.

### **It's Your CHOICE – Husband Be a Man. Wife Be a Woman.**

Women understand women pretty well, but they do not fully understand men, even though many women firmly (and incorrectly) believe that they do understand men completely. Men understand men pretty well, and to some extent really can never achieve understanding of women, and men do not tend to conclude that they fully understand women. There are types of sporting events, recreational activities and entertainment which many men enjoy, and they fully understand why men enjoy those things, while those events are often considered by women to be childish or dumb. There are activities and types of entertainment which many women enjoy and women fully understand why women enjoy those things, while many men think that those things are boring, silly or ridiculous.

Men tend to place a high importance upon being strong and decisive (and being perceived by others as being so). Women tend to place high importance upon sensitivity, compassion and concern for the feelings of others, and they tend to place less importance upon whether someone else perceives them as being strong.

Women are often more gentle in spirit than men. Women tend to be more law-abiding than men. Men seem to take more risks than women. Stability and security today are more important to a woman than to a man. Striving for and planning for potential achievements of tomorrow are generally more important to a man than to a woman. Women are generally more concerned about the more minute details of their physical appearance and dress than are men. Women are naturally attracted to men and it is natural for women to want to develop a romantic relationship with a man.

Generally speaking a woman is not going to have a sexual attraction to a man without there being some aspect of relationship in existence. Men are naturally attracted to women and it is natural for men to want to develop a romantic relationship with a woman. Men are visual creatures. Men can be sexually stimulated simply and quickly by the sight or thought of something erotic. It is relatively easy for a man to reach sexual climax. Men tend to have an insatiable appetite for sex and they can gladly engage in sex regardless of what circumstances or event had occurred immediately prior thereto. Generally speaking women do not have the same appetite for sex. Many women could be happy with only occasional sex. For a woman to reach sexual climax there is a need for numerous matters to be in order, e.g. the relationship, her emotions, her mood, the setting, the activities and interaction prior to anything physical, non-sexual touching, preliminary sexual touching, etc. (see Chapter 26 for a discussion about intimacy).

I have concluded that a “woman’s intuition” is a real thing. It is not simply like a man’s gut feeling or a hunch. I do believe that God has given to women an extra sense about things. Husbands will do well to carefully consider their wife’s intuition about matters. A number of years ago I wanted to pursue an investment opportunity outside of my normal profession. I figured that I had the background in law and in business and that I was in the better position to evaluate the enterprise. My dear wife had analyzed no financial data or any business plan, but she was very strong in her sentiments that the investment was a mistake and that we should not participate. Regrettably I pretty much ignored Pam’s counsel and the investment was made. It turned out to be a very bad decision and we lost a significant amount of money. I learned a

### It's Your CHOICE – Husband Be a Man. Wife Be a Woman.

number of lessons from that experience. One of them is that I had better give credence to my dear wife's intuition about things (and to her wisdom and counsel).

Women have a greater need to feel secure. Men have a greater need to feel important. Men are more driven by ego and have a greater tendency to sin in the area of pride and conceit. Men tend to be more direct. Men understand and do not take offense from very blunt and direct answers or directives. Men are more likely to think and work independently to solve problems and complete tasks. Women are more likely to give support to others and look for support from others. It is more important to women that they are liked by others. Women are more likely to accommodate and try to make peace. Women are more easily cut to the heart when someone expresses disapproval or dislike for them. If a man thinks that he is on the right path or doing the right thing, he is more likely to proceed even if someone disagrees or even contends with that choice or conclusion. Men have a task-completion orientation and are less concerned about the process than in achieving the objective. Women tend to be more concerned about details and methods along the way. Women are more patient and men are more impatient.

I think it is quite humorous that a new wave of so-called experts is hitting the scene these days. These new experts have "discovered" that there are differences between men and women, and that leading, supervising, and motivating women is different than leading, supervising, and motivating men. These "experts" have also arrived at their "new" conclusions that women display different responses and reactions than men do.

Until recent decades it was universally understood and acknowledged that men and women are different. That all changed when some far out people hit the scene with some type of spurious enlightenment. Such new thinking led to high powered promotion of the idea that there are no actual differences between men and women. They espouse the very destructive tenants that if you treat men and women differently you are sexist, and that anyone holding to a position that there are differences between men and women is a bigot. Such nonsense gained widespread approval and was promoted through the media. It has now even developed to the point that many or most politicians are scared to death to acknowledge the simple truth that men and women as God created them, ARE different (yet equal).

I have included this discussion about differences between males and females in this book on marriage because I believe that the reader needs to fully acknowledge the basic truth that men and women are different and then strive to understand each other. Different does not mean *wrong*. Different means . . . different. Those differences between males and females are part of the complimenting that God intended in bringing the husband together with the wife. Enjoy your differences. Indeed celebrate that which makes the wife womanly, and that which makes the husband manly. The husband should encourage his wife to accentuate her womanhood and femininity. The wife should encourage her husband to be masculine. By all means the husband should not try to force the wife to act like a man or to respond like a man. Equally so, the wife should not demand that her husband act like a woman or respond like a woman.

Husband, be a man. Wife, be a woman. That is a very important **CHOICE**.

## Chapter Fourteen

### AFFIRMATION

Think of the times when you received meaningful praise, timely encouragement or affirmation as you were growing up. I'll just bet that you can remember the names of the people who said it, the place where it was said, and the words that were said. Beyond a doubt such encouragement and such praise not only helped you at the time, and made you feel good, but it also caused you to feel more fondly toward the person who gave that encouragement and praise. That is simply the way we are wired.

Back to the Scriptural command that a husband must love his wife as his own body. What do we do with our bodies? Most certainly we make choices toward physical pleasure and away from physical pain. We take time and spend money to improve our appearance. We do not try to make ourselves less attractive. We have significant desires for things that make us feel good, and we have significant aversion toward those things that make us feel anxious, depressed or sad.

If I am to love my wife as I love my own body, I must affirmatively plan and pray for insight as to how I can best build up my wife, **affirm** her worth, and encourage and assist her to reach her full potential. Here are the questions that husbands should be consciously asking. How will this affect my wife? What can I do today that will make my wife happy and bring her pleasure? What can I do or say today to make my wife feel secure, at peace and safe? What can I do to encourage my wife to realize and sense her own worth and to let her know that I realize and appreciate her worth? What would be fun for my wife? How can I assist my wife to grow spiritually? How can I encourage my wife in her ministries? What can I do today that would be really nice or special for my wife? What can I do or say today to display afresh to my wife that I really treasure her? Wives should ask the same regarding their mate.

Admit it. You like to receive compliments. Most certainly your spouse enjoys receiving sincere compliments as well. Compliments, affirmation, and encouragements are not matters that are given once, and then somehow remain vital thereafter. I may eat a very large meal today and be stuffed. Yet tomorrow I will be hungry. Yesterday's food does not satisfy me today. So it is with affirmation.

It does not cost anything to affirm, praise, compliment, and encourage your spouse. Yet it will not happen unless you **CHOOSE** to do so. Consciously and deliberately plan for and pray about how you can be a very real encouragement to your spouse, how you can affirm your spouse, and how you can make him or her know that to you he/she is the most wonderful, cherished and special person on the whole planet.

## Chapter Fifteen

### ACCEPTANCE

You are not perfect and your spouse is not perfect. It is all too true that you have faults and that your spouse has faults. It is undeniable that you have weaknesses and that your spouse has weaknesses. In light of these facts, you can **CHOOSE** to do certain things about it. If you have a fault, then before the Lord and in love of your spouse, you need to try to correct the matter or improve in that area. If you have a weakness then try to get stronger in that area to the extent that you can through effort, education, etc. Yet for all your effort - no matter how sincere - neither you nor your spouse will reach perfection. Some things cannot be changed. Where does that leave us?

It is time to be at peace about the matter and to **CHOOSE** to ACCEPT your spouse the way he or she is even knowing of faults, imperfections and weaknesses. **CHOOSE** not to dwell upon those weaknesses. **CHOOSE** instead to dwell upon, enjoy, and even celebrate the strengths, positive qualities and beauties of your spouse. **CHOOSE** not to chafe or become aggravated every time some fault or weakness comes to the surface. **CHOOSE** to give that to the Lord. **CHOOSES** that you will love your spouse the way he or she is and that you will not condemn him or her. **CHOOSE** not to become angry with him or her. **CHOOSE** to decline to try to take out the speck in the eye of your spouse until the beam in your own eye has been removed. (Luke 6:41-42).

Then enjoy the freedom of it. Two imperfect people who are not in any way griping or nagging at the other to change. Do not be ashamed that you are not a perfect “10.” Be happy that your spouse can **CHOOSE** to ACCEPT you as **you** . . . and you **CHOOSE** to accept your spouse as herself/himself. Be content that your spouse is not a perfect “10” either. Give your spouse the joy of knowing that you ACCEPT your spouse as who he/she is.

## Chapter Sixteen

### A PARTNERSHIP

You and your spouse should share the joint and common objectives to please the Lord, to bring glory to God, and to become increasingly like the Lord Jesus Christ. Married life is a great and exciting enterprise. You and your spouse are absolutely intertwined in life. It is sensible for the couple to understand, communicate, and acknowledge the various gifts, strengths, talents, abilities and aptitudes of the husband and the wife. Most certainly a husband will be stronger in some areas than his wife, while the wife will have strengths that exceed those of her husband. When you and your spouse are working together, rather than in competition, decisions can be made to take advantage of and apply the strengths and abilities of both spouses. I am not ashamed to say that my precious Pam is better at many things than I am. Because we know that about each other, and are not threatened by that, we can positively take advantage of each of our strengths and abilities for our mutual good.

We all wish we had more **time**. At some point one spouse may have more available time than the other and it will make sense for that spouse to apply that time toward a particular common objective or task. It is a common sense reality that you are a team. So the team member who can best do it, or who is available to do it, should do it. When the job is done then the marriage unit benefits. In your partnership in life there should be meaningful communication about division of tasks and responsibilities. Some chores or assignments will be the primary responsibility of the wife, others will be the primary responsibility of the husband, and still others will be joint responsibility. There is nothing terribly scientific about this. If the couple will communicate and come to a satisfactory decision on such division of responsibilities and assignments, it will avoid conflicts, resentment, and bickering. Please remember that whatever you do, and whatever your spouse does it, for the common good. That means that what your spouse does is of the same importance to the partnership as what you do.

The respective responsibilities will most certainly change from time to time. For example, it may be that the wife will have some extra time to devote to mowing the lawn during one summer, but because the baby is born before the next summer, she simple cannot help out with the lawn the next summer. Life changes. Keep your communication open. Be a **giver** and not a **getter** in your partnership (See Chapter Five, page 22).

I think too much is made out of designation of certain jobs as being “a man’s job” or “a woman’s job.” On the other hand I have heard out-of-balance radicals say that unless one spouse does at least half of each type of chore, such spouse is cruel, or out of touch, or sexist. Remember, the marriage is a type of equal partnership. You are both plowing the same field. Anything that one partner does will benefit the partnership. It may take some trial and error to learn how to best divide up the assignments and responsibilities **for the common good**. Various jobs have nothing to do with **worth**. You are in this together.

Another important aspect of your equal partnership relates to **earning the family income**. Unless you have a very settled understanding about the equality of your partnership in life and the equal worth of the jobs each of you is doing, there will be fertile soil for tension and conflict.

### It's Your CHOICE – A Partnership

Usually the two spouses are not bringing in the same amount of income to the family pot. If you very consciously attribute the same **monetary** value to the tasks of each spouse you will be less inclined to think, “This is my money” . . . or “I am the one who earns the money.” Listen, it is a common and joint paycheck coming into the family pot, and you both **earned** it equally regardless of whose name is on the check.

If one spouse is the sole bread winner, while the other spouse is maintaining the home and caring for a myriad of family chores, they still have contributed **EQUALLY** to the partnership. The money that is bought in by the one spouse working outside of the home is earned just as much by the spouse working in the home.

It is a blessed thing when the wife can devote her full time to the high and holy responsibilities of being a wife, mother and homemaker. That is not always possible and to the extent that the wife must or elects to work outside of the home, there will need to be adjustments in the various responsibilities at home. In your equal partnership you cannot have a husband work at his job and do nothing at home, while his wife works at her job and is expected to do everything at home too. Again, be **givers** and not **getters**.

There is a wonderful possibility that you and your spouse will have children. Your equal partnership in marriage applies to child rearing responsibilities and participation. Both you and your spouse need to be committed to fully participating in the activities and duties of child rearing. Open communication will assist you in maintaining an ongoing understanding about which spouse is to do what with your children.

I repeat. One aspect of the marriage relationship is that of a partnership. You are equal partners in a totality of responsibilities. Apply the time, talents, gifts and abilities of each spouse to get the job done. There must be no one-upmanship. There are no higher jobs or lower jobs. Both partners are of equal value, and the work of each partner is absolutely as valuable as the work of the other. Be sure to communicate about the division of responsibilities. Furthermore, keep a close eye as to the changes that occur month by month and year by year. Regular communication about responsibilities will assist in avoiding conflict and misunderstandings about your various jobs, duties, and responsibilities.

## Chapter Seventeen

### THE VERY BEST OF FRIENDS

One often hears that husbands and wives should be friends. It takes affirmative thinking, praying, planning and developing, for your friendship with your spouse to develop the way it should. As with so many of these facets of developing an outstanding marriage relationship, it calls for regularly making right **CHOICES** and then obediently carrying out those **CHOICES**.

Friendships don't just "happen." Friendships take time to develop. Friendships develop faster when both parties are deliberately seeking to develop the friendship. There must be a sharing of time. You need to do things together. You must **CHOOSE** to put your spouse into the position of your genuine, intimate, and **BEST** friend.

Some people believe that they will have a happy marriage even though their closest buddy is someone other than their spouse. I strongly disagree. Some people believe that they can have their most "fun" with someone other than their spouse. I suggest that to the extent that you operate under that belief, you are diminishing the opportunity to develop your marriage relationship and you are stunting your friendship with your spouse. The absence of being best friends can actually be at war with a happy and fulfilling marriage.

Let me get a little personal. My dear wife and I do have an outstanding relationship and part of our success is that we are the very best of friends. I suggest that the following realities of our marriage will also be true for other excellent marriages. There is no person in the world with whom I would rather spend time than my dear wife. There is no person in the world I would rather share an experience with than my precious Pamela. There is no person in the world whose counsel is more important to me than my sweet Pam's. There is no one in the world I would rather share goals, dreams and aspirations with than my darling Pam. If there is something fun to be done, I sure hope that my dear wife can do it with me.

Here again is an area for balance and common sense. **NO** person is going to do everything with his or her spouse. And there are fun things to do that will not include your spouse. And it is good for each spouse to have friends besides his or her spouse. However, I have encountered people who are out of balance the other way. What about the man who says that he needs to spend time with the boys? Or the woman who must spend time with the ladies? In an absolute sense, and by itself, that is not necessarily bad. The rub comes when either (1) you are going out with your buddies is to the exclusion or hurt your spouse, or (2) you are developing a closer friendship with any person other than your spouse.

Remember that God makes love a **CHOICE**. You have heard the expression that, "There is always time to do the things we really want to do." Time is very limited and no person has enough time to do all that he or she wants to do with everyone. Each person makes **CHOICES** about how to spend his/her time. For Christians who are sincere about developing an excellent marriage, there is absolutely no room for the wife to be a "hunting widow" or a "golf widow." Similarly there is no room for the husband to be wondering when he can spend some quality time

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with his wife who is always at this club or that club or spending much of her time with her lady friends.

Here is an area where creativity can be used to accommodate legitimate friendships with others, while reaching your deliberate goal of keeping your spouse as your best friend. I was not a great basketball player, but before I lost my knees I enjoyed playing basketball. My precious wife has athletic abilities but she simply is not a basketball player. We organized a group of men to meet at the church gym on Monday and Thursday mornings at 5:30 a.m. for an hour of full court basketball. Early morning basketball did not conflict with other activities of my wife and family. Another area for creativity is to think of activities that can be done as a couple or with a group of people. This allows for wholesome development and enjoyment of friendships which do not exclude your spouse.

If a man or a woman resists these suggestions about friendships, then perhaps that person simply does not honestly desire to have the deep, intimate relationship with his or her spouse that can exist when a husband and wife are indeed **BEST FRIENDS**. Each morning both husband and wife should think about and pray about, “What can I do today that will draw me closer to my spouse and provide pleasant joint experiences which will enhance our friendship and help me to like and love my spouse even more?”

**CHOOSE** to make and keep your spouse as your very best friend.

## **Chapter Eighteen**

### **FORGIVE AND FORGET**

You must be quick to forgive your spouse. Forgiveness also involves a **CHOICE**. “He who covers over an offense promotes love” (Proverbs 17:9a). “Love covers over all wrongs.” (Proverbs 10:12b). “[Love] keeps no account of wrongs” (I Corinthians 13:5b). “Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.” (I Peter 4:8).

We are admonished by the Lord Jesus Himself to forgive others. In Matthew 6:12, as a part of the model prayer, Christ prayed, “Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.” Note carefully that immediately following said model prayer Jesus continued by saying, “For IF you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do NOT forgive men their sins, your Father will NOT forgive your sins.” Jesus gave us the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant in Matthew 18:21-35. Jesus applied the truth of this parable about forgiveness when He said, “This is how My heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother **from your heart**.”

God declares the wonderful results of expressing love by covering and forgetting matters. By contrast, a failure to forgive is like a cancer and it continues to rot and to become more deep seated. There have been numerous times I have counseled with people experiencing marital problems who have brought up transgressions of one spouse against the other that had occurred many months or years earlier. The failure to forgive had led to bitterness which in turn had driven a wedge between the two. It can cause resentment and ultimately can destroy a marriage.

Be very quick to apologize when you are wrong. Seek forgiveness from your spouse so there will be quick restoration of the relationship. Your forgiveness must be as complete as God's forgiveness which is infinite forgiveness and total removal of our transgressions. “As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us” (Psalm 103:12). “For You have put all my sins behind Your back” (Isaiah 38:17b). “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more” (Jeremiah 31:34b).

Past transgressions, hurts or mistakes of your spouse must not be placed in some type of contingency drawer to be pulled out and thrown in the face of your spouse when you feel there will be need for some ammunition. Make no provision to be armed for conflict with your spouse. You are not at war with your spouse.

After working up a sweat or after being in very hot temperatures for an extended period of time, that shower feels so good. It is great to be refreshed and clean. One of the sweet blessings of being a Christian is that after we have confessed our sins and have truly repented, our heavenly Father cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Our record of sin is expunged and clear. God's forgiveness is so complete that he even cleanses our conscience so that we can be released even from any feelings of guilt (Hebrews 9:14). We are to forgive others in the same way that God has forgiven us. More specifically, we must forgive our spouse in the same way that God has forgiven us. You must **CHOOSE** to expunge your spouse's record completely. You must **CHOOSE** to make your spouse clean in your eyes of any unrighteousness and to allow your

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spouse the sweet cleansing shower of your genuine forgiveness. You are loving your spouse in a godly way when you give your spouse the freedom to not only be declared clean from a transgression but also to have his/her conscience feel clean as well.

You will be blessed when your spouse forgives you in that way...You must **CHOOSE** to give that forgiveness to your spouse. It will be important to your happy marriage.

## **Chapter Nineteen**

### **LITTLE THINGS COUNT**

Fix your mind on the days when you were dating your spouse. When you were getting ready to be with your beloved you made sure that you looked your very best. That person you were seeking to impress, attract and look your very best for, is the same person who is now your spouse. Do not make the terrible, yet common, mistake of “letting things go” after you are married. Instead work even harder to look your best for your spouse.

We all know that there are times when our spouse will see us looking anything but our best. But that should be the exception rather than the norm. The businessman who believes it is important to dress sharp and look neat for business, should consider it even more important to look attractive for his wife. A woman who wants to have her hair, makeup and dress perfect for a social function to be attended by people she considers important, should even more so want to be stunning and beautiful for her husband.

When a person ceases to care about looking his or her best for his or her spouse, is when the person actually does become less appealing, less attractive, and less stimulating visually. That can set the stage for the husband and wife to take each other for granted.

When you were dating it was not unusual for there to be regular gestures of affection such as love letters and love notes, a wink of the eye, flowers, little presents, and the like. Remember how you carefully thought out such overt gestures of affection and how much you enjoyed giving and doing those things. You also remember how happy it made you feel when you received them and how it gave you a special fresh sense of being loved and appreciated. Those little gestures were sweet and wonderful and they definitely had a positive impact on the growing relationship.

During your courtship you were careful to be very, very polite. The man did everything he could to be a perfect gentleman. The woman was so gracious and polite. That must not stop during marriage. Because your spouse is the most important person in your life, you should maintain the highest degree of courtesy toward one another throughout your lifetime. Please ignore the rubbish that comes from those who want to trash and demean good traditions and practices. The husband is not “patronizing” his wife when he opens the door for her, helps her with her chair, walks curbside, or stands when she enters the room. Some misguided people look for evil motives or agendas behind such tender courtesies. Get your marching orders from the Word of God rather than from special interest groups, the “politically correct” people, or the media. Be sure to remember to say “please” and “thank you,” “excuse me” or “pardon me” to your spouse. Be quick to verbalize an apology if it is due. It seems that men have a harder time than women in this area. When your spouse does do something for you that is really nice, notice it and show that you are genuinely appreciative. Respond with an immediate and sincere smile and a “thank you.” Your spouse will know the difference between a demand for something, on the one hand, and a polite petition, on the other hand. Courtesy shows respect and you need to do everything you can to show and declare your respect for your spouse.

### **It's Your CHOICE – Little Things Count**

Picture how you would act if one of the most celebrated and famous individuals in the world would be in the room with you, or in the car with you. You would most certainly be conscious of your appearance, speech, and conduct. You would be very conscious of extending every courtesy to that V.I.P. Mark this very carefully. **Your spouse IS MORE IMPORTANT** than that famous or important person. Your spouse is the one person among all of the billions of living people on the face of this planet who is united with you for life by God's divine orchestration. Your spouse is the one with whom you share the absolutely unique and mystical relationship of marriage.

The longer you are married to your spouse the better equipped you will be to do even more creative and delightful little things for your spouse. Love notes, surprises, planning special events, flowers, presents, and other gestures of love and affection really are not "little things" after all – they are huge. These are the types of things that will not and cannot happen without conscious and affirmative planning and action. **CHOOSE** to do these things for your spouse. When your spouse does these things for you make sure that you let your spouse know how much you appreciate those gestures and how much it thrills you. Make a big deal about it. You will both greatly enjoy these gestures, gifts and courtesies. Please give thought to what you are going to do today to express your love, devotion and affection to your spouse. Then **CHOOSE** to do it.

## Chapter Twenty

### GIVE A CHEERFUL COUNTENANCE (a.k.a. SMILE)

Here is a little nugget of truth for having a happy relationship. Make sure that the countenance that you portray to your spouse is one that is positive, pleasant and affirming. Smile!

About twenty-five ago I heard a woman tell a story that really hit home with me. She stated that she had carefully cleaned her house before leaving for the store. Her husband was left to take care of the kids. While she was gone the father found a sturdy box and he turned it into a toboggan. The steps down to the basement became the slope. They were having a great time bouncing and banging down the steps only to land with a thud at the bottom. Those carefully cleaned steps soon became littered with shreds of cardboard and there were a couple of marks on the wall. The father put both kids and himself in that big box for one glorious final run and they laughed their way down the steps until they rolled out at the bottom. Right then the back door opened. All of their eyes were instantly riveted upon the mother who stood at the top of the stairs. There was a deafening second of silence. . . . Then the mother broke out in laughter and the father and children instantly joined in great belly laughing and giggling. It turned into a very special moment for the entire family. What made the difference following that second of expectant silence? It was how the mother responded toward the father and children. If she had chewed out her husband and kids for getting her clean steps dirty, it would have been a bad ending to what had been a fun time. By contrast, the mother's smiling countenance and affirmation brought her directly into the fun and allowed the time to be one of genuine family unity and joy.

What we portray with our eyes and face will have a significant impact on others. This is even more true within the family context. The above story caused me to think through the impact of my countenance upon my wife and children. I thought to myself that it would make for a more pleasant home if I would try to remember always to greet my kids and to greet my dear wife with a smile. When I walk in the room knowing that I will probably see someone in my family I consciously put on a smile and make sure that my eyes catch the eyes of my wife or the eyes of my children in a way that my eyes say, "I affirm you," and "I love you," and "I am really happy to see you." I cannot quantify the specific value this practice has had through these decades, but I know that such affirmative **CHOICES** day-by-day and encounter-by-encounter have been of very real and substantial benefit in developing warm and happy relationships in our home.

Here again is the practical rule. **CHOOSE** to affirm your spouse with your very countenance. When you know you are going to see your spouse, put on a smile and do everything you can to communicate with your eyes that you love, honor, respect and affirm your spouse. It does not cost anything to do this. It is a very simple principle. But you will miss the genuine benefit of doing this if you do not **CHOOSE** to make this your practice.

One of the natural consequences of smiling more is that you also laugh more together. By all means **LAUGH TOGETHER**. Think about the significant relationships you have had. When you describe the relationships that have been very meaningful to you, I'll bet that you will

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include the fact that you could laugh together with that person. There was the freedom to say what you wanted and you knew that the person would be accepting rather than judging. That created an environment ripe for laughter. With the husband- wife relationship being the highest relationship created by God, laughter should characterize your times together. I am not talking about being flippant about serious matters. I am not talking about being giddy when it is inappropriate. I am talking about such an open, relaxed and non-prideful relationship that there is the freedom to be yourself, the freedom to laugh at yourself, the freedom to laugh with your spouse, and the desire to laugh together.

**CHOOSE** to smile at your spouse. **CHOOSE** to laugh together.

## Chapter Twenty-One

### ACKNOWLEDGE AND DEPEND ON GOD AND DO NOT TAKE YOURSELF TOO SERIOUSLY

Don't take yourself too seriously. Don't allow your pride to be wounded if someone notes that you made a mistake or have a weakness? You and your spouse need to throw away the façade of total perfection, omniscience and omnipotence. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why I have enjoyed each year of Christian life more than the year before. I think that with more experience in life, and another year of knowing the Lord and growing in Him, I take myself less seriously and I have a greater freedom to be content and to laugh at myself. Isn't it a type of pride that says that it is O.K. for someone to laugh **with** me but I will be offended if someone laughs **at** me. If something is funny, it is funny, even if I am the one who has done something ridiculous, or embarrassing. Marriage should provide the freedom to laugh together without being offended.

Who created you? God (Genesis 1:26, 27). Who gave you your gifts and abilities? God (Exodus 31:1-5; Romans 12:6). Who sustains your life? God (Psalms 3:5; John 10:10; Psalms 121; Colossians 1:17). Who possesses all authority? God (Matthew 28:18). Who has provided every material possession, blessing, and income that you have? God (James 1:17; Philippians 4:19; Psalms 13:6; Matthew 6:8, 33; II Corinthians 9:8). Who controls the length of your life? God (Hebrews 9:27). Who know what today and tomorrow will bring? God (James 4:14; Psalms 147:5; Isaiah 40:28; 42:9; 46:10; Daniel 2:28; Matthew 24:36; Acts 3:18). Who is wise and the giver of wisdom? God (I Corinthians 1:24-25; Luke 21:15). Who is our shepherd, protector and shield? God (Psalm 23; Psalm 33:20; Psalm 121:7).

This list could go on and the answer would remain the same. **God** is all in all. You notice that none of the questions above can be answered with a "me" or a "you." The clear comparison between the great and infinite God, and things and people of the world, is set out in Isaiah 40:6-8; 12-28. God Himself instructs about our relative insignificance before our Maker using the inspired illustration of the potter and the clay. "Woe to him who quarrels with his Maker . . . Does the clay say to the potter 'What are you making?' Does your work say, 'He has no hands'?" (Isaiah 45:9). "You turn things upside down as if the potter were thought to be like clay ! Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, 'He did not make me'? Can the pot say to the potter, 'He knows nothing'?" (Isaiah 29:16).

Instead our proper response before God should be as found in Isaiah 64:8. "Yet, O Lord, you are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand."

The sin of pride is a great barrier and hindrance to the development of an outstanding Christian marriage. The sin of selfishness is also a short circuit to the proper development of a happy and God-honoring marriage relationship. These two sins come in a host of varieties. Recognition of the total greatness, superiority, and wisdom of God and of our total insignificance apart from God, is a good start toward avoiding the sins of pride and selfishness, and helps us to not take ourselves too seriously.

## It's Your CHOICE – Acknowledge and Depend on God and Do Not Take Yourself Too Seriously

When Jesus said “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me,” (Matthew 28:18), that left exactly **zero** authority that belongs to either the husband or the wife apart from Christ. Jesus further stated that, “Apart from Me you can do **NOTHING**” (John 15:4). I calculate that “nothing” really means nothing (nil, zip, zero, nada).

**Therefore do not take yourself so seriously . . . lighten up . . . do not be defensive . . . be willing to laugh at yourself and to even allow others to laugh at you as well.**

I see recurring themes during the marriage counseling I do with Christian couples. I see husbands who distort and disobey God’s biblical instruction by taking the position that they have some type of oppressive, dictatorial authority over their wife. Since all authority in heaven and earth has been given to Jesus Christ, that man is wrong to think that he has some independent authority apart from that which is delegated by the Lord. When I delegate authority to my staff I remain cognizant of how they use that authority and carry out my instructions. If a staff member should usurp authority, or fail to abide by my instructions, I simply am not going to favor that staff member with my continued blessing to exercise that authority, and I most certainly am not going to give that staff person who refused to follow my instructions any additional delegation of authority. God carefully (omnisciently) observes how we follow His instructions and use delegated authority.

I also see wives who are determined to climb over their husbands to be head of the house and to be a dictator of the house either through overt assumption of the throne or through calculated manipulation (whining, pouting, conniving, digging, etc.). I see one spouse making wholly selfish choices to the subordination of or the exclusion of the other spouse. I see people who believe that by putting down their spouse they will somehow elevate themselves. I see folks who are defensive about everything and who are willing to assume or attribute a wrong motive to their spouse. I see spouses engaged in various types of turf wars about property, jobs, relationships, and even their children.

In so many cases each spouse has dug in his/her heels and is willing to “work to fix the problem” only so long as it is the **other** spouse who does the changing, correcting, bending, etc. I hear them say that it is that **other** spouse who had done this, said that, failed to do this, refused to change that, and on and on and on.

So much of such contention and struggling for position can be avoided if you start with the proper understanding of how insignificant you are in comparison to the Lord. When you understand that God owns everything, then the quest for material things and the selfishness of hoarding them for yourself should not develop. When you really appreciate the fact that life is but a breath (Job 7:7, 16; 9:25; Psalm 39:5,11; 144:4; James 4:14), perhaps you can concentrate today on things that are really important. In this short life of ours it is urgent that we make the right **CHOICES** and take the actions necessary in order to obey and serve the Lord, bring glory to Him, and to build and really appreciate relationships – especially the relationship with your spouse.

Let me ask you this question. When a person is being defensive, is that person usually happy? The answer is no. Here’s another question. Which person is happier in life – the one who is

## It's Your CHOICE – Acknowledge and Depend on God and Do Not Take Yourself Too Seriously

selfish and guarding his treasure, or the one who is more interested in serving others than in having things? A third question is, which person would you rather be around – the one who spits back when someone laughs at an embarrassing moment that is noticed, or the person who joins in the laughter and even finds levity in that embarrassing moment? We find each of these questions easy to answer. Why then is it so difficult for us to make the **CHOICE** to drop our wall of defensiveness or to come off of our high and prideful perch we have established in our efforts to insist that others consider us to be important, strong, flawless, etc.?

Allow your spouse the freedom to laugh with you and even at you. Be vulnerable, real, and open. Quit being selfish. If you are **CHOOSING** the life of a **giver** rather than a **getter** you are going to have a much easier time “lightening up” and not taking yourself so seriously, your spouse will certainly enjoy being with you ever so much more, you will enjoy yourself much more and you will have a much happier life.

God is so great. Isn't it wonderful that He invites us to follow Him and depend on Him. That's where security is and that's why we can relax in life. If we **CHOOSE** at the beginning to do it God's way we save all of the pain and trouble of beating our heads against brick walls and running into road blocks in the road. Simply accept God at face value when He says, “Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails” (Proverbs 19:21). Assuming that you have resolved that you are not going to attempt any longer to ascend to God's throne, or that somehow your ways are better than God's ways (Isaiah 55:8,9), then you can capture the reality that your hand is in God's hand and that He will ordain your steps (Psalm 37:23-24, 31; Proverbs 16:9).

Picture a little child who finds himself alone in the middle of an unknown woods as the sun is going down. He does not see the edge of the woods and has lost his bearings. He does not know which direction leads out to safety or what danger lurks along the trail or what villains or creatures may be hiding in the woods. As dusk turns to darkness every sound in the woods gives rise to terror. That lad can think all he wants that he is smart or strong or fast. The truth is, he does not know what lies ahead and he is incapable of proceeding safely.

Change that story just slightly. Add that the boy is holding the hand of his father who is a woodsman who works that woods and knows every square foot of the terrain. The lad feels the sturdy grip of his father's palm wrapped around his little hand. The boy is totally at peace. Indeed, he is free to enjoy the night sounds of the woods. Is that boy worried about not knowing the way out? No, because his father knows the way. Is that boy embarrassed because he is not strong enough to meet the dangers of the midnight woods? No, he doesn't need to even pretend that he can protect himself. It is quite sufficient that his father is with him, will not leave him, and will protect him. The boy is not afraid. The boy is free to be himself and to enjoy his father's presence. Because he is not trying to put on some false show and because he knows that his father is totally in control he really has the freedom to enjoy that moment of life. If he stumbles, his father will lift him up and he can even chuckle with his father as he brushes himself off. His father loves him. His father knows what lies ahead. And his father will protect and guide him.

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So our heavenly Father, who is so great and wonderful, will protect and guide you (Read Proverbs 3:23, 26; Psalms 5:8; 7:10; 9:9-10; 16:8, 11; 17:8; 18:6, 28-30; 22:5, 24). When you have faith in the Lord and know who He is, you can trust Him. This leads to a right perspective of your relative insignificance, which in turn allows you to be less prideful and selfish. Finally, all of this gives you the freedom to **CHOOSE** not to take yourself so seriously and to enjoy God's merciful and gracious blessings . . . including the matchless blessing of your God-given spouse.

## Chapter Twenty-two

### THE HONEYMOON IS NEVER OVER

You have heard the well-known expression that is “the honeymoon is over.” What does that mean? Obviously this relates to some change in the marriage after the honeymoon. Other chapters of this book also relate to how to keep the honeymoon in your marriage for life. Therefore I will not repeat those matters here. The purpose of this chapter is to clearly remind you to **CHOOSE** to keep the special excitement and romance in your marriage.

What is so special about a honeymoon anyway? Why would you think that it is good for the honeymoon to continue for a long time? The honeymoon occurs immediately following the end of the courting and dating phase. These were great days for the couple, when the man and the woman each were enraptured with thoughts of the other. They exchanged love notes. They gave flowers and gifts. They spent time and money to look their very best for each other. They put each other and spending time with each other at the top of the priority list. Their hearts jumped as they thought of each other and when they saw each other. They yearned for the embrace of the other. They laughed at each others' jokes. They were proud to tell others about their sweetheart. They were willing to sacrifice for the other. They dwelt upon the best qualities, gifts, and talents of the other and seemed to be blind to the imperfections and weaknesses of the other. Oh yes, courtship is sweet and glorious. During the honeymoon the reality of actually being married is fresh and new and wonderful. During the honeymoon there is the time of sexual intimacy seemingly without limits. It is as if the whole world stops and together the newlyweds take an endless, deep drink from the fountains of ecstasy. It is so beautiful. Nice, huh?

If you could bottle up the nectar of all of those good things about a honeymoon and then sprinkle it upon yourself and your spouse regularly thereafter, you would think that you two had a potion that is magical and unreal. Oh really? Unreal? Unattainable? I say **no**.

Let's consider again your **CHOICES**. On the honeymoon each spouse chose to overlook imperfections and faults, choosing instead to enjoy and celebrate the beauty and positive qualities of the other spouse. There is absolutely nothing stopping the couple from continuing to make those exact same choices five years, ten years, twenty years, thirty years, or fifty years, after the wedding. Those choices to do the sweet things and to keep the spouse as a priority are freely available throughout the decades of the marriage. But, of course, it takes daily **CHOOSING**, planning, thinking and praying ... and **doing it**.

There seem to be countless couples who have been married for a number of years who would only wish that they could regain that spark and recapture that special delight that was a part of their dating relationship and their honeymoon. This cannot happen merely by wishing. This comes from faithful obedience to the Lord's principles as set forth in the Bible for Christian husbands, for Christian wives, for Christian parents. Add to your obedience your rock-solid, unwavering commitments to the Lord and to your spouse. If you want a lifelong honeymoon, then I invite you to reconsider and reaffirm to your spouse the commitments listed in Chapter 6. See also Chapter 19, "Little Things Count." Please remember to do those same sweet things for your spouse that you did while dating. It is enriching and fun for the **giver** and the receiver.

**It's Your CHOICE – The Honeymoon is Never Over**

Planning and showing how you cherish and treasure your spouse will pay huge dividends in your marriage relationship.

Do you want that fire in your marriage for life? Then you do it. **CHOOSE** it. These are not difficult or secret principles. But unless you make right **CHOICES** there will come a point when the painful reality will be that your honeymoon is over. Hey, this boy shouts it from the rooftops, "I love my precious wife and she is my lady. Yes, we are still on our honeymoon. What we have is infinitely more delicious and wonderful and fulfilling after these thirty-five years than we ever could have dreamed of when we gazed into each other's candle-lit eyes at the altar on our wedding night. How about you?"

*It's your **CHOICE**.*

## Chapter Twenty-three

### INVEST IN TIMES TOGETHER OVER MATERIAL THINGS

Couple A scrimps and saves and buys a new couch. Because of buying a new couch they do not have the funds for going out on dates or taking a brief vacation. Couple B scrimps and saves and uses the money to go on some dates and a vacation, but their couch which is in terrible shape cannot be replaced because there are no more funds. Answer this question. Which couple - Couple A or Couple B - is the most **practical**?

In my opinion it is Couple B - the one that spent the money on the dates and the vacation rather than on the couch. Furthermore, it is Couple B that was planning for and building their relationship through investment and experience. Think back ten years and ask yourself this. What significant memories do you have? Do you remember some particular object you purchased, or do you remember things that you **did**? Or to ask it a different way, when you think of how you have bonded or significantly related with another person, has it been because you shared ownership of some thing, or because you have shared common experiences? You know, that new couch will grow old and at some point be hauled away, whereas the memory of those dates and the memory of that vacation will remain and continue to be enjoyed and that investment was in a **joint** experience. If the husband goes on a vacation by himself and the wife goes on a vacation by herself then each can report to the other about what they did and there can be some interest and a degree of vicarious enjoyment. But the most that could ever come from that in the future would be something like, "I remember that you told me that you did . . ." That is infinitely different than the two of you reminiscing about a **joint** experience and saying something like, "Remember when we did ... and we saw ...." Time is such a precious commodity. Life is but a breath. If you and your spouse are serious about maximizing your relationship and creating the highest beauty in your relationship, then you will be **investing** your money in going on dates, going on vacations and doing things together. That date that you skip can never be replaced. That vacation that was missed can never be made up. Plan for and pray for your special times with your beloved mate. Sweet times do not need to cost a lot, and often your dates can be free. Be creative. Turn off your cell phone or leave it at home or in the car (prove to your spouse that quality time with her/him is more important to you than any other person in the world who has your cell phone number).

You can never be 25 together again. You can never be 40 together again. You can never be 55 again. Life is like that. Not only is time a "use it or lose it" proposition, but so are the opportunities for you and your spouse to do things together each day, week, month, year, and decade that the Lord gives you together.

*I suggest that you do whatever it takes to make time for each other, and to spend your money in the most **practical** way of all - building your loving marriage relationship, which in turn will bear fruit for a lifetime. Your joint memories will never rot, rust, or be stolen. And they will even get sweeter as the years go by. **CHOOSE** to enjoy and celebrate each other and your beautiful union.*

## Chapter Twenty-four

### AGREE TOGETHER NOT TO STRIVE FOR GOALS THAT ARE MERELY WORLDLY OR MATERIALISTIC

There is nothing wrong with someone being popular. There is nothing wrong with someone ending up with material possessions. It is not money that is the root of all evil, but it is the **love** of money that is the root of all sorts of evil (1 Timothy 6:10). There is nothing wrong with a person having fame or notoriety. But it can be very wrong before the Lord and it can be very destructive to the marriage relationship if the husband or the wife is **STRIVING** to be popular, famous, wealthy, have material things, obtain peer recognition or public acclaim, and the like.

This brings us back to your **CHOICES**. If you make **CHOICES** which result in placing the attainment of popularity, riches, material things, peer recognition or public acclaim **ABOVE** spending significant quality time with your spouse, or **ABOVE** the needs, desires and pleasures of your spouse, then your marriage relationship will not become as beautiful, mature and excellent as it could be otherwise, and your marriage relationship may be in for trouble.

By way of illustration let me discuss briefly just one of these matters - striving for entrance into the "club" of the social elite. In many communities, particularly in smaller cities, there is a group that thinks of itself as being the movers and shakers, top drawer, the ones that really count, etc. It is sort of like the popular clique or the "in" crowd back in high school. It develops into a type of "us" versus "them" distinction. This "in crowd" actually does maintain some reins of power, but only over those who are **striving** for entrance, acceptance, and upward mobility within that group. The power brokers in that group really do exert significant hierarchical power over the wannabe's and strivers. Those seeking acceptance must deal with the anxiety of first trying to learn the expectations and demands of the top dogs within the group.

Then they must continually strive to please, copy, follow, and meet the expectations of those higher in status in that group. Yuk.

If a husband or a wife for some reason is one of those striving to be a part of the social elite or to climb the social ladder, it will probably lead to conflict in the marriage. There will be differences in priorities, and **CHOICES** will be made that subordinate the spouse in favor of the vanity of seeking to meet those silly social expectations.

Here is a truism. The power of the so-called elite is absolutely limited to only that group itself and upon the wannabe's clamoring to get "in" and climb up. If you and your spouse agree that you do not have a goal, individually or as a couple, to be a part of that shallow "club" then the apparent power of the bosses in the club is non-existent and there is zero control or pressure from that group upon you. That brings freedom. It also releases you to spend your time, important planning, and praying about how to climb up the ladder of excellence as a Christian husband or as a Christian wife. Instead of worrying about how to impress some self-proclaimed V.I.P., you are free to pray and plan even more urgently and enthusiastically how you can be the most interesting, charming, winsome and attractive mate for your spouse.

## It's Your CHOICE – Agree Together Not to Strive for Goals that are Merely Worldly or Materialistic

Next I will discuss briefly the matter of money and material things. My precious wife and I have had two separate periods of true poverty. The first was our early marriage years when we were still in college and law school. The second was following a year of sabbatical from the law practice when we had answered the call to do missionary work in Japan. We gained the perspective of living in poverty the first time as newlyweds and as young parents. After a few years and after experiencing a newly built house, cars, and being a partner in a business, we went back to starting over from scratch (or as Pastor Ivan French says, we even "started from itch"). I am not in an "I have been more destitute than you" contest with anyone. I say this only to point out that I have some perspective about **CHOICES** that enhance the marriage relationship which do not depend on whether you have little or much. **DO NOT BE AFRAID OF BEING POOR.** The quality of your marriage relationship does not depend on having material things. I warn you not to make **CHOICES** in favor of material things that detract from your relationship with the Lord or your relationship with your spouse.

Now that Pam and I are in our middle fifties we can look back and consider the lives of our high school and college classmates over the decades. We became parents at a young age. We heard some of our friends make statements to the effect that they could not or would not have children until after they finished a certain graduate degree or until after they had purchased a house or until after they had certain debts paid off, and on and on and on. We know of some couples that became so wrapped up in the accumulation of material things and in their respective careers that they simply concluded one day that their careers were more important than having children or that they had become too old then to start a family. I know of the immeasurable riches and joy of raising children. I know how the joint experience of parenting children in dependence on God has enriched, deepened and broadened my relationship with Pam and has been vital to our shared dreams, goals and joint efforts. I also know that these benefits absolutely could not have occurred to the same degree otherwise. Furthermore, all of the investments of time, prayer and discussions through the years relating to raising our children and participating with them in life were all matters that directed our attention toward each other rather than away from each other in the direction of independent matters.

These types of benefits are available regardless of the your economic position. To make life **CHOICES** based on the attainment of a higher income or the fulfillment of some material goal is hollow and is looking in the wrong place for satisfaction, security, and joy.

In Chapter 23 I discussed practical "investments" for building relationships. This same principle of practical investment applies to the **CHOICES** that are made in favor of living life **NOW** in a way to enrich and enhance your marriage relationship. (Did you know that tomorrow never arrives? You always live only today). **CHOOSE** your spouse over riches. If the Lord blesses you with some degree of material success, keep your hand open and know that it is all the Lord's. Give Him your unqualified permission to take any or all of your possessions and to use any or all of it at any time for His purposes. All the while build your treasure in heaven and build the treasure of beautiful and loving relationships which are not dependent on the whims of the national economy or world market pressures.

**It's Your CHOICE – Agree Together Not to Strive for Goals that are Merely Worldly or Materialistic**

Being materialistic does not mean that you are rich or have lots of material things. The materialistic person is the one whose focus, goals and attention are on attaining or keeping material things. Also, if a person's sense of well-being is greatly affected by money or material things, he is materialistic. Some of the most materialistic people I have met are relatively poor, but they are obsessed with getting money or things, or they are engulfed in envy because someone else has money or things. Such thoughts control their attention and emotions. The man who goes into a rage because his wife or child broke or damaged a material possession is materialistic. The cheapskates and the tightwads are some of the most materialistic people of all. They clench onto their money or things so tightly that their thoughts and emotions are consumed and controlled by their possessions.

*As a couple please agree that you will not **strive** for material or worldly goals. It is your **CHOICE**. And be sure to be very thankful to your gracious Heavenly Father for the material things God places into your entrustment and be very generous to others with those material blessings.*

**Chapter Twenty-five**

**COMMUNICATION**

Both verbal and nonverbal communication are important to the marriage relationship. All of the chapters of this book relate in one way or another to communication.

There are a myriad of books and an unending stream of seminars relating to communication. Therefore I am only going to suggest that you and your spouse make the following commitments to each other regarding communication, then **CHOOSE** to do it:

1. I will always be totally honest with you.
2. I give you my unrestricted permission to ask me any question whatsoever and I will be willing to answer all of your questions and inquiries.
3. I will fully share with you my dreams, goals and innermost thoughts.
4. I will tell you about important and interesting things I encounter or experience.
5. I will keep you informed of my schedule and upcoming events.
6. I will be an open book for you to see and read. Since we are not mind readers, I will take the initiative to reveal and even read to you my "book."
7. I will tell you what I think, and what is on my mind.
8. I will tell you what and how I feel – joys, hurts, fears.
9. I will not conceal from you any important thing.
10. If I perceive or learn that the lines of communication between us have become impaired or strained, I will give the improvement and restoration of our communication my priority attention and my highest effort.
11. I will actively listen to you, and give you my undivided attention.
12. I will **CHOOSE** to want to communicate with you.
13. I will do my best to truly and fully communicate with you.
14. I will **CHOOSE** to make sincere inquiries and to ask questions, affirming to you my interest in you and your life.

Like so many things, good communication is in the **doing** of it. That requires your constant and conscious **CHOICES** . . . Do it!

## Chapter Twenty-six

### INTIMACY

**SEX** in marriage is beautiful. God intended sexual relations to be an important aspect of the union between the husband and the wife. God created sex both for procreation and for ecstatic pleasure between a husband and a wife. It was God who put the sexual drive into humans and it was God who ordained sex within marriage to be holy, wonderful, pure, undefiled, and to be an incredibly special act of uniting the man and the woman as one flesh.

**BEWARE.** Breaking God's rules concerning sex turns it into something most ugly. The same God who created and encourages sex within marriage, is the God who condemns fornication, adultery, incest, homosexuality, bisexuality, child molesting, pornography, rape and the other sexual sins that are contrary to God's rules.

We read the historical account in Chapter 16 of Exodus about how God beautifully provided **manna** to sustain the Israelite community. They were hungry and without food. The Bible says:

"Then the Lord said to Moses, 'I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will **follow my instructions**. On the sixth day they are to prepare what they bring in, and that is to be twice as much as they gather on the other days.' (16:4-5) . . . "No one is to keep any of it until morning.' However, some of them **paid no attention** to Moses; they kept part of it until morning, but it was **full of maggots and began to smell**" (16:19-20) ... "On the sixth day, they gathered twice as much - two omers for each person - and the leaders of the community came and reported this to Moses. He said to them, 'This is what the Lord commanded: "Tomorrow is to be a day of rest, a holy Sabbath to the Lord. So bake what you want to bake and boil what you want to boil. Save whatever is left and keep it until morning." So they saved it until morning, as Moses commanded, and it did not stink or get maggots in it. 'Eat it today,' Moses said, 'because today is a Sabbath to the Lord. You will not find any of it on the ground today. Six days you are to gather it, but on the seventh day, the Sabbath, there will not be any.' Nevertheless, some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather it, but they found none. Then the Lord said to Moses, 'How long will you **refuse to keep my commands and my instructions?** Bear in mind that the Lord has given you the Sabbath; that is why on the sixth day He gives you bread for two days. Everyone is to stay where he is on the seventh day; no one is to go out.'" (Exodus 16:22-29)

The manna which God provided to His people was very good and fresh and satisfying **so long as they kept God's commands and God's instructions concerning the manna**. When the people violated God's rules concerning the manna, the manna became smelly and full of maggots and it was not available to satisfy. I suggest that there is a clear parallel with God's provision of sexual relations within marriage which is pure, beautiful and wonderful so long as you obey God's Scriptural commands and instructions about sex.

It is too bad that we do not have some kind of symbol to denote different types of sex. We ought to have a word written like "**\*sex\***" to refer to God-honoring sex within marriage. Sex within

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marriage is as different from the sex sins of rape, fornication, adultery, incest, homosexuality, bisexuality, child molestation and pornography, as the manna gathered as instructed by the Lord was different from the remains that were full of maggots and smelly. Since we don't have some kind of a symbol like **\*sex\*** to denote God-provided and God honoring sex in marriage in contrast to sinful sex, please understand that when I use the word "sex" in the rest of this chapter I will be referring to God-honoring sexual relations between a husband and wife in an existing marriage relationship. Please remember that in God's eyes "same-sex *marriage*" is NOT marriage.

In Chapter 5 I introduced the distinction between the **giver** and the **getter**. Applying the principles of being a **giver** is very vital to a joyful, mutually beneficial and satisfying sexual relationship in your marriage. There is a dichotomy that exists. God built into you very real sexual drives. The sexual drive combines the physical and the emotional. This God-given sexual drive leads your body and mind to say, "get for myself sexual pleasure and satisfaction . . . and when I want it." By contrast the loving principles of being a **giver** in your marriage say, "give to your spouse sexual pleasure and satisfaction". . . taking into full consideration when and if your spouse wants sex now.

In the matter of sex, one who is a **getter** says or thinks things like this: "I want sex, so we must have sex" ... "I do not want sex, so we will not have sex". . . "I want to engage in this particular sexual activity or position, and I do not care if you *do not want* to do that, or if it is uncomfortable or unpleasant for you". . . "Engaging in this sexual activity or position does not 'do anything for me' or 'turn me on' or give me any great pleasure, therefore we will not do it, regardless of the fact that it is very arousing and exciting for you or pleasurable for you". . . "I do not think that the sexual parts of my body are erotic, arousing, or even attractive, therefore I refuse for you to touch them, caress them or gaze upon them, even though you say that gazing upon, touching or caressing those parts of my body is very pleasurable, exciting and arousing to you" . . . "I don't care if you want to make love, I'm just not in the mood. No". . . "I don't care if you are not really feeling well or if you are not in the mood, I demand that we have sex now". . . (etc. etc.).

By contrast, applying the principles of being a **giver** to love making, the following choices are made: "I choose to love you through sexual love. I present my body, including all of its sexual parts to you. I invite you to be aroused, excited, stimulated and to have the fullest sexual pleasure with my gift of my body to you. My gift of love includes my presentation of my whole self to you, including my body". . . "I am committed to your sexual pleasure and I will engage in sex with the priority of expressing my love to you through our physical interaction and by doing that which is in my power to bring you to full sexual satisfaction . . . I will never force you to have sex". . . "I will always be tender with you during our love making and I will never intentionally hurt you". . . I invite you to communicate honestly and openly with me concerning your sexual needs and desires and I openly invite you to communicate without embarrassment to me about how I can bring you greater sexual satisfaction and fulfillment". . . "I commit to you that our sex life, including what we do and say in the marriage bedroom, will be kept perfectly secret between the two of us and I will never breach that confidence". . . If some sexual activity is arousing, exciting, or stimulating to you, I will welcome such sexual activity even if it does not particularly 'do anything for me' or 'turn me on'" . . . "I will never refuse or withhold sex as a

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method or means of manipulation, punishment or revenge”. . .“I will never ridicule, scoff at or demean your sexual prowess”. . .“I will honestly accept your involvement in our love making as your sincere gift of love to me.”

You quickly see that some of these matters will collide with each other if only one of you is a **giver**, and the other is a **getter**. The **giver** and the **getter** are each engaged in an unending series of **CHOICES**. Even a married couple comprised of one **giver** and one **getter** can have some meaningful sex and some excellent love in the physical realm. I do believe, however, that only if both you and your spouse are **givers** will the sexual aspect of your marriage relationship remain happy, exciting, and a source of continuing enhancement of your marriage relationship and union.

Even if both you and your spouse are **givers** there will need to be continuing accommodation and balance. God has wired men and put juices in them with the result that men have sex on their mind and men seem to have an insatiable appetite for sex. Men are visual creatures. Just something the man sees or even a thought in his mind's eye can be enough to make him ready and rearing to go. Many husbands have dreams of their wives becoming almost nymphomaniacs. Probably their wives would agree only to this limited extent, "Right, hubby, only in your dreams."

How then does this play itself out in your marriage? It starts with open communication about sex, your bodies, your desires, etc. And even though you may feel that you have those messages correct today, you need to regularly “go back to the mailbox” to see what messages may be received in the future.

Assuming that you are committed to being **givers** to each other, you will come to an equilibrium in your sex life that is not necessarily static but remains a matter of conscious understanding. With most couples it means that the wife is going to agree to and engage in sex more often (or in some cases considerably more often) than would be the case if she were simply engaging in sex when she felt a need or desire for it. And the husband is going to back off and cease from demanding or expecting that he will have sex with his wife every day and at every place.

There actually is more of a responsibility on the husband than the wife in keeping the sex life of the couple in balance. In most cases the husband can easily achieve sexual climax. If he approaches his sex life with his wife as simply a matter of getting his own sexual pleasure and release without consideration of the wife, then the husband will start a downward cycle that will eliminate sexual desire on the part of the wife and will ultimately be destructive to the man's own opportunities for the pleasure of sex with his wife. The husband had better be tender, loving and romantic toward his wife if he is to have realistic expectations of excellent sex with his wife. Guys seem to be slow to get the picture. If there are some chilly words at supper time it is highly unlikely that there will be a hot time in the sack at bedtime.

Males tend to be direct and demanding. Males are more forceful and physical by nature. Females are more emotion-driven, and God has wired ladies so that they tend to want all of the environmental factors to be perfectly in order in preparation for or even as conditions of love making. If you are both being **givers** then you will take into account how the God-made

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differences between men and women are very real factors in your sex life (see Chapter 13 for a brief discussion of that topic). Wives need to take into account the facts that sex is so very important to husbands, that husbands are visual creatures and that husbands would like their wife to be sexy and seductive. The wife's natural reaction to her husband seeming to have sex on his mind all the time, is to stay away from the topic or from any actions which are seductive or suggestive of sex for fear that the husband is going to always take that as an invitation for sex. The wife may at times prefer to repress rather than excite her husband's sexual desires. Wife, remember that you are to be a **giver**. Unless the wife is a **giver** who is considering the differences that exist because her husband is a man, she probably will discount or ignore the visual aspects. While the man would enjoy watching his wife disrobe, the wife more naturally would prefer to get ready for love making in private out of the sight of her husband. The wife learned on her honeymoon that her expensive negligee seemed like a waste when her husband so quickly took it off of her. So she comes to the practical conclusion that there is no need for her to have or wear sexy attire when she is alone with her husband. That, however, is not how the man thinks.

The husband will be delighted and welcome with open arms (literally) the following activities by his wife: for the wife to surprise him with some sexual playfulness and horseplay; for the wife to tell him that she has a deep and passionate desire to make love with her husband; for the wife to tell him specifically how she would like to engage in sex that night (or day); for the wife to gladly allow her husband to view her nakedness; for the wife to flat out seduce her husband sometimes; and for the wife to be more ready to say "yes" than she is to say "no."

Husbands, if you are going to be a **giver** to your wife in the realm of love making you are going to very consciously work at being sensitive to your wife and to her needs. Whereas husbands have the ability (some wives would call it a disability) to shut out absolutely everything else in life and engage in sex without limitation, hesitation or apology, women simply are not that way. Husbands, if you want your wife to respond to you sexually then you had better make sure that your relationship with her is in order. Remember, it is the **husband** who is commanded by God to love his wife. Allow me to simply list some things that the husband needs to consider or to do as a part of the preparation for his wife to gladly participate in love making and to obtain fulfillment in your love making.

Remember the "**nest principle**." As a **giver**, the husband will honestly and affirmatively give credence to his wife's concerns about getting fixed and right those "sticks" that pertain to relationships, the family residence, etc. The wife wants the environmental factors of the place, time, mood, privacy, etc., to be in order. Therefore, the husband will not demand to have sex when there is a chance that there will be an interruption, or when the children will know or suspect that their parents are then engaging in sex, or when things are not tidy and clean. Husbands need to be very aware of the physical and emotional aspects of their wife's menstrual cycles and husbands must choose to refrain from sexual expectations or attempts in thoughtless disregard of "that time of the month." The husband needs to accept the reality that in most cases his wife does not want to have sex as much as he does, so there is the need sometimes for the husband to simply "cool it and back off." Husbands need to shower their wife with nonsexual expressions of love. Men, shave and shower before sex!

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Wives never get tired of hearing their husbands say "I love you." Husbands need to be overwhelmingly liberal in giving compliments, praise, support, and expressions of appreciation and thanks to their wives. Husbands need to **PLAN** romantic gifts, occasions and dates with their wife. Husbands need to show their affection to their wife by hugging and holding her, holding her hand, and the like (yes, husbands, wives like to be held and embraced without the physical contact always leading to some direct sexual contact).

Naturally each spouse desires that the other will avoid thoughts of sex unless they are exclusively thoughts about having sex with his/her spouse. Because of the juices flowing through a man he is prone to think about sex more often if he has gone without sex for a longer period of time. Wives should take to heart the reality that as she gives sexual intimacy to her husband, the wife is also making it easier for her husband to resist the temptation to consider lustful thoughts or to look upon some woman's body passing by (1 Corinthians 7:5). The wife who decides to be the sex dictator by allowing sex only when she wants to, needs to, or when it seems to be the perfect time, place and setting to meet her whims, is unloving and she is dangerously putting her husband into increased jeopardy of fighting lustful thoughts.

While it may be possible for the husband to go, "slam, bang, whammo, *ZZZZzzz*," that certainly does not do much for the wife. The husband who is a **giver** will place the joy, pleasure, fulfillment and satisfaction of the wife above his own. The husband needs to work at the preparation of the relationship, environment and mood as earlier stated. Then through expressions, gestures and caresses of love, the husband will give his love sexually to his wife taking into account how differently a woman becomes aroused, stimulated and ultimately brought to sexual fulfillment. Then engage in cuddling, talking and kissing for dessert after the main course.

Here is another practical reality for wives to know. God has constructed men so that they operate somewhat in the reverse of women. A woman wants to feel nurtured and loved before she desires sex with her husband. If the wife regularly turns down her husband's sexual advances the husband will feel that the wife does not really love him and that will in turn decrease the natural response of the man to feel romantic affection toward the wife. The husband is more likely **AFTER** his sexual desires have been met to want to hug and hold his wife who had just lovingly made love with him.

Let me throw in a dose of practical reality. With men needing and desiring sex more often than women, and women simply taking more time to reach sexual climax, there will be times when the husband and wife, both being **givers**, will intentionally have a "quickie" which will lead to sexual pleasure and release for the husband, but which both know will not bring the wife to sexual climax. That is not only okay, but communicating about and including such "quickies" as a part of your sex life will be beneficial to your overall intimacy and relationship.

Because of the God-created differences in the sexual approaches and needs of men and women there will be times when the husband wants to make love and the wife does not. If the wife is not a **giver** she might concede to engage in sex, **BUT** then in words, attitudes or actions she communicates messages such as, "come on, hubby, let's get this over with" ... or "even though this is really disgusting and I am mad that you want to have sex, I will put up with this if I really

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have to" . . . or "I will lay here as a corpse and you can do what you want, wake me when you are finished." If that happens the wife has a malicious intent to use that sexual experience to hurt her husband. That will also have the destructive result that the husband will feel that the wife does not love him much. The husband in that case will probably have conscious thoughts that his wife is not sexy or appealing. That will dim a man's passion for his wife. Don't allow that spiral downward to start.

Husbands, you need to be sure that you are **givers** and not **getters** in your love making. All it takes is for the wife to explain that she does not want to have sex, for some husbands to go into their scene of pouting, anger or other manipulative or hurtful responses designed to try to make his wife feel like she is a bad wife, or an unloving wife, or a frigid fish, or abnormal. Men, do not do that. It does not come as naturally for men to be sympathetic, compassionate or understanding. Being an excellent husband has to do with making right **CHOICES** before the Lord and before your wife and therefore the husband must **CHOOSE** to listen to his wife, **CHOOSE** to give credence to her reservations about having sex right then and **CHOOSE** to even accept that because she is a woman who is different than a man there will legitimately be times when she simply is not in the mood and really would be much happier that night if her husband would be loving in nonsexual ways right then. By the way, do not listen to what the world has to say about what makes a great sex life. You are destined to be frustrated or to feel inadequate if you look to Hollywood to specify how your love life should work. Do not let the worldly "experts" specify what is really the height of sexual success. Neither the husband nor the wife has failed if they never have "simultaneous orgasms," or if the wife is slower in having an orgasm, or if the husband ejaculates quickly, or if the couple is unschooled in exotic, ancient or foreign sexual techniques. If the husband and wife are both **givers** then I predict that sexual "problems" will work out just fine. In fact, a little secret is this. If you love each other God's way, and you are both committed to an excellent sex life as **givers**, you will find that each decade is far better sexually than the decade before. You will laugh together about how you two have graduated from the level of sexual knowledge and pleasure that you two had when you had been married only ten years . . . or only twenty years.

When you elevate your spouse to be your wonderful, exclusive sexual partner in your thoughts, affections and lovemaking, and if you will make your relationship with your spouse to be the highest human relationship in your life, then I predict that you will have a beautiful sex life. But remember, you must be a **giver**. You must make right **CHOICES**. And you must obey God's principles for sex if you are to receive manna from heaven rather than smelly and maggot-filled garbage.

**Some additional advice for your honeymoon.** This book was completed just a few days before my precious daughter Nikki would be married to Jonathan, and the second edition was completed days before my precious daughter Laura would be married to Brian. I want to add some specific advice relating to the honeymoon.

"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth" (3 John 4). My precious Pamela and I are blessed beyond measure by having two adult daughters who love the Lord and who have honored God with their lives and their bodies. I humbly thank God from my innermost being that He has guided and protected my girls so that they entered marriage as

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virgins. Being a virgin brings some practical realities to the honeymoon. The husband and wife are joined together in the wedding ceremony and before God they become "one flesh." At the honeymoon bed each spouse presents to the other a wedding gift of glad and voluntary physical union. Be sure that you are mentally and emotionally prepared for the honeymoon. In order to truly give yourself sexually to your spouse during the honeymoon you must be free from any misguided baggage or false preconceptions about sex in marriage. For years your defenses have been in place to avoid premarital sex, and you have been alerted that sex outside of marriage is "bad." On your wedding night those defenses must go down. Be sure that you fully accept without reservation that God himself created sex and your Heavenly Father not only approves of your sex in marriage, but God **intends** for you to have wonderful sex in marriage.

Next you must be sure that you are physically prepared for your honeymoon. Both the bride and the groom must be aware that the bride's hymen is intact. Be gentle. Be careful. By all means take lubrication on your honeymoon and use it. Also if (when) the new wife starts to get sore, she should RIGHT THEN say, "Sweetheart, I'm starting to get sore." And husband, right then should STOP . . . for the time being. I suggest to the bride and the groom that you are about to involve your sexual parts in new and wonderful ways. Again, these sensitive parts can become sore or injured if not treated with special care and gentleness.

Picture a person who enters into a banquet room filled with new and delicious delicacies sufficient to provide for at least a week. He will not enjoy such bounty to the fullest if he so ravenously gorges himself on the first day in the banquet room that he becomes sick and sore. If instead he would take his time, savor each morsel, and allow some time between feedings, he will greatly increase his enjoyment of the banquet table and he will be able to enjoy the feast for the entire week. It is to be expected that along with the excitement of revealing your nakedness to your marriage partner there may be some embarrassment. That's okay. Please do not be ashamed about being a novice at sex. Your honeymoon is the **beginning** of your life-long course in anatomy and sexual behavior. You do not need to be a sexual athlete or some type of sexual superman or superwoman on your honeymoon. Year by year you will know and understand each other's emotional and physical responses better. The longer you are married the more experienced you will be at having sex. At some point you will look back at your honeymoon and smile about how the two of you happily fumbled around during your initial sexual experiences.

You should have the freedom to move into the honeymoon suite (i.e. the "banquet room") without any misgivings, embarrassment or apologies for starting your marriage without knowing much about the "how-to's" and techniques of sex. Listen. Getting started is going to come pretty naturally. Becoming good, then great, at sex is going to take years and decades, and if you will each be a **giver** you should enjoy each step of the process. So be relaxed and ecstatic about sex and enjoy the feast.

\*\*\*\*\*

A final practical comment. **CHOOSE** to see your spouse, and your spouse's body, as beautiful and attractive. I mean firmly conclude and believe that your spouse is truly beautiful. And then say so to your spouse daily (do NOT say, "to me, you are gorgeous." No, you say, "You are gorgeous"). Allow yourself to fantasize about your spouse's naked body and about having sex

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with your spouse (NEVER about anyone else, as that would be sinful lust and would hurt your relationship and your sex with your spouse). Your enjoyment of the beauty of your spouse is your **CHOICE**.

## Chapter Twenty-seven

### A HODGEPODGE

For what it is worth I want to include some random additional suggestions and advice for you and your spouse.

1. Look your spouse in the eye when you two speak.
2. When your spouse is talking to you, give your spouse the courtesy of stopping what you are doing and **give** your actual undivided attention to your spouse. Turn off your cell phone at home.
3. Carry a picture of your spouse and be sure it is the very first picture in your billfold.
4. Put on your calendar every year your spouse's birthday, your anniversary, Valentines Day, Mothers Day, Fathers Day, etc. Have some other backup means of making sure that you will not miss those dates.
5. Regardless of your finances invest in a top-quality mattress. You need effective sleep. You need an excellent marriage bed.
6. Do not live in the same house as or next door to your parents or your spouse's parents, if there is any other alternative.
7. Cut the apron strings and the umbilical cord from your parents and help your spouse to cut the apron strings and the umbilical cord from your spouse's parents. (But remember... it is quite okay to maintain excellent and loving relationships with both sets of parents.)
8. The first part of leaving and cleaving is **to leave**. This needs to happen at the very outset of your marriage. Otherwise the lack of “leaving” or it will reek havoc. Maintain sweet love and contact with all parents while protecting your new family from any meddling or intruding by parents. There is no place for either of you to put the relationship with a parent ahead of the relationship with your spouse.
9. No matter how poor you are be sure you give of yourself and your finances to the Lord. Remember God is the Great Provider. He can keep your cup sufficiently full either by putting more into the top of the cup or by plugging holes at the bottom of the cup. Honor the Lord with the firstfruits of your time and your earnings and joyfully trust Him. God will always keep His promises to provide for your needs.
10. Become a part of and give of your quality time and energies to your local Bible-believing church. Jesus said He would build His church. Jesus is the head of the church. The church is the bride of Christ. Do not forsake the assembly of believers. Your local church is the best place to find like-minded friends and to obtain the blessing of genuine fellowship and friendship.
11. Be creative in planning surprises, dates and gifts for your spouse. Sure it takes time, effort and some expense. Anything worthwhile does.
12. Determine well in advance where you are going to spend your holidays. You might as well assume that it is impossible to please everyone. Since you cannot be two places at once there may be some tough calls. This matter can be a minefield when both the husband and the wife come from loving families who want very much to be with their children and grandchildren. If those families are genuinely loving, however, they will not be selfish and they will understand when you make your decisions. While doing everything you can to take into account the schedules and desires of your respective parents, when all is said and done,

## It's Your CHOICE – A Hodgepodge

you need to make the decision that is best for **your family** (i.e. you, your spouse and your children) and next, if possible, do what you can to accommodate the preferences of your parents and siblings.

13. Start your own happy family traditions, and make such traditions more important each year.
14. Make a really big deal out of family birthdays, holidays, and special events. Celebrate and emphasize those days and be sure everyone in the family is involved.
15. After your wedding day do not become a bum or a slob, or a pig.
16. Do not think for a second that your time is any more important than the time of your spouse. I repeat, do not think for a second that your time is any more important than the time of your spouse. A corollary to this is that you should never declare or complain to your spouse (or to anyone else for that matter) about how busy you are. Of course you are busy. Everyone is busy. And it is really obnoxious to tell others how busy you are.
17. Take lots of photographs. If you have a video camera, take videos as well. You never can go back and capture a moment. Those photographs and videos will become increasingly more important and fun in future years. Have some means of organizing and identifying those photographs and videos as you go.
18. Be sure you and your spouse get regular exercise. It will help you feel better, stay healthier, look better, and it will increase your chances of meaningfully living longer together.
19. If your spouse asks you for a favor, do it if you possibly can.
20. Clean up after yourself. You made the mess so you take care of it and put things away. Unwad and turn right side out your dirty socks and underwear.
21. Make a master family calendar and keep it up-to-date and filled in. Put it where you will see it often (e.g. with magnets on the refrigerator door). Write down calendar items so that both you and your spouse have a reminder of what is coming, and so that you can avoid planning something that is in conflict with another matter that has already been established or scheduled.
22. When you are out of town, call your spouse every day no matter what.
23. When you are walking with your spouse, hold your spouse's hand.
24. Get a good lock for your bedroom door.
25. Remember that the most loving thing you can do for your children is to truly love your spouse. . . and openly show it.
26. Do not nag your spouse.
27. Do not be a whiner or a complainer.
28. Wear only perfumes or colognes that your spouse really likes.
29. If at all possible, do not make plans or invite people over without first checking with your spouse.
30. Do not watch a lot of much TV – TV is a time-robber and often is a cesspool with themes and images displeasing to God.
31. Do not be a dictator with the television remote.
32. Do not view magazines, movies, T.V. shows or videos which show nudity or are sexually explicit, or which depict themes of adultery, homosexuality or fornication.
33. Do not gossip or be a busy body.
34. Be balanced in the use of your telephone. Don't jabber with friends on the phone when your spouse is home.
35. Include your spouse as your equal partner in spending decisions.

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36. Decide which decisions should be the husband's call, which decisions should be the wife's call, which decisions should be the call of either, and which decisions require the agreement and consent of both of you.
37. Come to an agreement and an understanding about what types of music will be played in your home and in your car.
38. Never, never, never, never allow any anger, dispute, animosity or hostility to go unresolved by the time either of you turns in for the night.
39. Do not be a worry wart. If you have the tendency to worry, study the clear Biblical instructions about not fretting, not being anxious (e.g. Matthew chapter 6) and actively cast your cares on God for he cares for you. Actively choose to trust God and keep your faith in the Lord. Pray that the Lord will help you to not be a worrier.
40. Watch your tongue. Do a topical study in the Bible concerning the dangers and damage of the tongue (e.g. James 3:1-12; Proverbs 21:23; 25:15,23; Psalms 39:1; etc.).
41. Consider the imminent return of the Lord Jesus Christ and the practical impact that should have on your godly living, right choices, and your obedience to God's principles in your marriage.
42. Think about, pray about, plan for, and establish various annual goals, individually and as a couple. Share and discuss your goals with your spouse. Have a method to evaluate how you are doing.
43. Make a habit of writing things down. We all forget things if we do not make the effort to establish a system of reminders.
44. Write and deliver love notes, love letters, and (if you have the ability) poems to your spouse.
45. Plan and do things that break the routine. Guard against monotony or getting into ruts.
46. Do everything in your power to nip in the bud any problem that you see. The sooner the matter is addressed, the better. Keep little fires little - they are a lot easier to put out that way.
47. Make sure you and your spouse are not presumptuous of each other, or of others (or of God).
48. Make sure you and your spouse are not ingrates. Go overboard in noticing what you should be thankful for, and in expressing your sincere gratitude.
49. Get into the habit of sending thank you notes and appreciation cards. Send those "thank you" notes and cards immediately. If the thought enters your mind that "I should send a note of thanks or encouragement to her/him," then DO IT that day.
50. If something needs to be done or fixed around the house, and it is your role or responsibility to do it, then do it as soon as you have the time and wherewithal to do it. If you need outside help then get the help as soon as you can afford to do so.
51. Do everything that is within your power to make and keep your home as the castle, oasis, and refuge for you and your spouse. Do everything in your power so that you and your spouse would rather be at your home than any other place on the face of the globe.
52. If you have some mannerism or habit which is offensive to your spouse, do everything you can to stop it or change it.
53. Commit yourself to regular evaluation about how you are doing in your marriage, in your Biblical role, in the development of your relationship with your spouse, and in the actual implementation and practice of Scriptural principles for the marriage.
54. Prepare and practice giving your testimony of how you came to Christ, how your spouse came to Christ, and what it means to you that Christ is in the center of your home. That way you will be ready, individually or as a couple, to share the Gospel using your own lives.

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55. Communicate with your spouse and come to a very clear and totally understood agreement as to how to know when the other person does not remember the name of a person just encountered. When the setting would normally call for an introduction, but your spouse does not do so, you will know that your spouse does not remember the name of the person. Because of such understanding, you will be prepared to affirmatively introduce yourself to the person and ask that person's name or do something else to save your spouse from embarrassment.
56. Be very liberal every day in giving your spouse kisses, hugs, pats and "I love you's." Show your affection and affirming smile to your spouse numerous times each day.
57. Because there is not enough time to do all of the good things, you must decide what are the best things and give them priority. Periodically review your memberships in organizations, activities and commitments and decide whether these should continue or whether you should eliminate some so that you will have time for your family and so that you will have time to be more effective in the activities you retain. It is vital that you learn to say "no" to some of the requests made to you. Remember that a decision to help some particular organization may at the same time be a choice that will hurt your spouse and children or it may diminish your opportunity to enhance your relationship with your spouse and children.
58. There are so many things that are just fine in their proper context, place and in balance. Hobbies, recreational and sporting activities, hunting, fishing, computer time, golfing, meeting the boys, meeting the ladies, and the like can all be fine. But if these items even in the slightest become an offense to your spouse or crowd out quality time and activities with your spouse, then those other items need to be very directly subordinated or even eliminated if necessary.
59. Establish a place in your home for leaving messages between you and your spouse. When you get home make it a practice to check for a message. When you have a message for your spouse, put it there. This serves a practical function. It also is a place where you can leave love notes, notes of encouragement and notes of appreciation. If you can afford an answering machine I recommend it because it can help you and your spouse remain in better contact.
60. Husbands, how about loving your wife by exercising routine toilet detail. First, you are not a perfect shot, so take one step closer, please. Second, when finished check the rim and floor to see if you left your marks. Third, if there is anything to clean up you do it right then. If you think that is disgusting, imagine what your wife thinks. Be a **giver** nor a **getter** – even with toilet detail.
61. Be wise with your finances. It is a great tragedy that so many newlyweds these days have the false expectation that they should live at or near the lifestyle that their parents are presently enjoying. These newlyweds either are misguided or are ignoring the facts that their parents started out poor, struggled for years and worked their backs off to improve their financial status and security. Get your eyes on reality and expect that you will have to work your backs off as well. Watch out for credit cards. If you can't afford something, why not just go without it or at least put it off until you can afford it.
62. Here is a practical exercise. Go through each chapter of this book and make a list of the **CHOICES** that are called for. Consider how and what you have been **CHOOSING**. Then resolve to make the right **CHOICES**.

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63. Here is another practical exercise. Review the chapters of this book and pull out how you can be a **giver** rather than a **getter** in the application of the various principles and topics presented.

Then decide how you can actually put those **CHOICES** to be a **giver** into action in your life and in your marriage.

## Chapter Twenty-eight

### CONCLUSION

The best advice I can give about marriage is that you read the portions of Scripture quoted in Appendix A. Nurture your relationship with the Lord every day and obey His word concerning your marriage. Here is my guarantee. If both you and your spouse will live to glorify Jesus Christ and if you will implement the principles from Scripture concerning your marriage, you **WILL enjoy a happy and God-honoring marriage.**

**... CHOOSE WELL!**

... and then AUTHENTICATE your **CHOICES** with your OBEDIENT and God-honoring words, deeds, thoughts and attitudes.

- Paul D. Refior \*  
("Rafe")  
[www.refior.com](http://www.refior.com)

\*Pronounced "Ray' – fee – or"

**APPENDIX A**

**BIBLE VERSES ABOUT MARRIAGE**

Genesis 2:18, 21-24

The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, He took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib He had taken out of the man, and He brought her to the man. The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. [The "leave and cleave principle"].

**Genesis 3:16-19**

To the woman He [God] said, "I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you." To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return."

[Do not fret or be surprised that life and work have painful toil, thorns and thistles, and that work requires the sweat of your brow. That is the "zero point." So take your eyes off of that. Expect that. And get on with life without grumbling].

\* \* \* \* \*

**Exodus 20:14**

"You shall not commit adultery." [Could it be any clearer?]

\* \* \* \* \*

**Leviticus 18:20**

"Do not have sexual relations with your neighbor's wife and defile yourself with her."

**Psalms 119:131**

I open my mouth and pant, longing for Your commands.

\* \* \* \* \*

## **It's Your CHOICE – Bible Verses About Marriage**

**PROVERBS.** (I suggest you read the entire book of Proverbs, including the following specific verses).

### **Proverbs 2:16-17**

[Wisdom] will save you also from the adulteress, from the wayward wife with her seductive words, who has left the partner of her youth and ignored the covenant she made before God.

### **Proverbs 3:7, 17, 27-28**

Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and shun evil.

[Wisdom's] ways are pleasant ways, and all her paths are peace.

Do not withhold good from those who deserve it, when it is in your power to act. Do not say to your neighbor, "come back later; I'll give it tomorrow" - when you have it with you.

### **Proverbs 5:15-20**

Drink water from your own cistern, running water from your own well [your own spouse]. Should your springs overflow in the streets, your streams of water in the public squares? Let them be yours alone, never to be shared with strangers. May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth. A loving doe, a graceful deer - may her breasts satisfy you always, may you ever be captivated by her love. Why be captivated, my son, by an adulteress? Why embrace the bosom of another man's wife?

### **Proverbs 6:25, 32**

Do not lust in your heart after her [the immoral woman's] beauty or let her captivate you with her eyes.

But a man who commits adultery lacks judgment; whoever does so destroys himself.

### **Proverbs 7:22-27** [Heading into adultery]

All at once he followed her like an ox going to the slaughter, like a deer stepping into a noose till an arrow pierces his liver, like a bird darting into a snare, little knowing it will cost him his life. Now then, my sons listen to me; pay attention to what I say. Do not let your heart turn to her ways or stray into her paths. Many are the victims she has brought down; her slain are a mighty throng. Her house is a highway to the grave, leading down to the chambers of death.

### **Proverbs 10:9, 12, 19b, 29**

The man of integrity walks securely, but he who takes crooked paths will be found out.

Hatred stirs up dissension, but love covers over all wrongs.

... he who holds his tongue is wise.

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The way of the Lord is a refuge for the righteous, but it is the ruin of those who do evil.

### **Proverbs 11:4, 12b, 13b, 16a, 28**

Wealth is worthless in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death.

... a man of understanding holds his tongue.

... a trustworthy man keeps a secret.

A kindhearted woman gains respect ...

Whoever trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will thrive like a green leaf.

### **Proverbs 12:4, 9, 15b, 16, 18, 20b, 25**

A wife of noble character is her husband's crown, but a disgraceful wife is like decay in his bones.

Better to be a nobody and yet have a servant than pretend to be somebody and have no food.

... a wise man listens to advice.

A fool shows his annoyance at once, but a prudent man overlooks an insult.

Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.

There is ... joy for those who promote peace.

An anxious heart weighs a man down, but a kind word cheers him up.

### **Proverbs 13:3, 7, 10**

He who guards his lips guards his life, but he who speaks rashly will come to ruin.

One man pretends to be rich, yet has nothing; another pretends to be poor, yet has great wealth.

Pride only breeds quarrels, but wisdom is found in those who take advice.

### **Proverbs 14:1, 16a, 17a, 22b, 29**

The wise woman builds her house, but with her own hands the foolish one tears hers down.

A wise man fears the Lord and shuns evil ...

A quick-tempered man does foolish things ...

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... those who plan what is good find love and faithfulness.

A patient man has great understanding, but a quick-tempered man displays folly.

### **Proverbs 15:1-2, 13, 15-16, 18, 22, 30**

A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. The tongue of the wise commends knowledge, but the mouth of the fool gushes folly.

A happy heart makes the face cheerful, but heartache crushes the spirit.

All the days of the oppressed are wretched, but the cheerful heart has a continual feast. Better a little with the fear of the Lord than great wealth with turmoil.

A hot-tempered man stirs up dissension, but a patient man calms a quarrel.

Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.

A cheerful look brings joy to the heart, and good news gives health to the bones.

### **Proverbs 16:3, 8, 24, 32**

Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and your plans will succeed.

Better a little with righteousness than much gain with injustice.

Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.

Better a patient man than a warrior, a man who controls his temper than one who takes a city.

### **Proverbs 17:1, 9, 13, 14, 22**

Better a dry crust with peace and quiet than a house full of feasting, with strife.

He who covers over an offense promotes love, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends.

If a man pays back evil for good, evil will never leave his house.

Starting a quarrel is like breaching a dam; so drop the matter before a dispute breaks out.

A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.

### **Proverbs 18:1, 10, 22**

An unfriendly man pursues selfish ends; he defies all sound judgment.

The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe.

He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the Lord.

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### **Proverbs 19:13b, 14b**

... a quarrelsome wife is like a constant dripping.

... a prudent wife is from the Lord.

### **Proverbs 20:3**

It is to a man's honor to avoid strife, but every fool is quick to quarrel.

### **Proverbs 21:9, 19, 21**

Better to live on a corner of the roof than share a house with a quarrelsome wife.

Better to live in a desert than with a quarrelsome and ill-tempered wife.

He who pursues righteousness and love finds life, prosperity and honor.

### **Proverbs 23:4**

Do not wear yourself out to get rich; have the wisdom to show restraint.

### **Proverbs 25:11, 24**

A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver.

Better to live on a corner of the roof than share a house with a quarrelsome wife.

### **Proverbs 27:23**

Be sure you know the condition of your flocks, give careful attention to your herds;

### **Proverbs 29:11, 20**

A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself under control.

Do you see a man who speaks in haste? There is more hope for a fool than for him.

### **Proverbs 30:21, 23a**

Under three things the earth trembles, under four it cannot bear up: ... an unloved woman who is married ...

### **Proverbs 31:10-31**

A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies. Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value. She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life. She selects wool and flax and works with eager hands. She is like the merchant ships, bringing her food from afar. She gets up while it is still dark; she provides food for her family and portions for her servant girls. She considers a field and buys it; out of her earnings she plants a vineyard. She sets about her work vigorously; her arms are strong for her tasks. She sees that her trading is profitable, and her lamp does not go out at night. In her hand she holds the distaff and grasps the spindle with her fingers. She opens her arms to the poor and extends her hands to the needy. When it

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snows, she has no fear for her household; for all of them are clothed in scarlet. She makes coverings for her bed; she is clothed in fine linen and purple. Her husband is respected at the city gate, where he takes his seat among the elders of the land. She makes linen garments and sells them, and supplies the merchants with sashes. She is clothed with strength and dignity; she can laugh at the days to come. She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue. She watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness. Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: "Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all." Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised. Give her the reward she has earned, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate.

**SONG OF SOLOMON** (a.k.a. Song of Songs) [This is a love song concerning marital love between a husband and a wife with the two principal characters identified as the "Lover" and the "Beloved."]

### **Song of Solomon 1:2, 4, 10, 13, 15-16**

(Beloved) Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth - for your love is more delightful than wine.

(Beloved) Take me away with you - let us hurry! Let the king bring me into his chambers.

(Friends) We rejoice and delight in you; we will praise your love more than wine.

(Beloved) How right they are to adore you!

(Lover) Your cheeks are beautiful with earrings, your neck with strings of jewels.

(Beloved) My lover is to me a sachet of myrrh resting between my breasts.

(Lover) How beautiful you are, my darling! Oh, how beautiful! Your eyes are doves.

(Beloved) How handsome you are, my lover! Oh, how charming! And our bed is verdant [green with growing plants].

### **Song of Solomon 2:2-6, 10 & 13-17**

(Lover) Like a lily among thorns is my darling among the maidens.

(Beloved) Like an apple tree among the trees of the forest is my lover among the young men. I delight to sit in his shade, and his fruit is sweet to my taste. He has taken me to the banquet hall, and his banner over me is love. Strengthen me with raisins, refresh me with apples, for I am faint with love. His left arm is under my head, and his right arm embraces me.

(Beloved) My lover spoke and said to me, "Arise, my darling, my beautiful one, and come with me. ... The fig tree forms its early fruit; the blossoming vines spread their fragrance. Arise, come, my darling; my beautiful one, come with me."

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(Lover) My dove in the clefts of the rock, in the hiding places on the mountainside, show me your face, let me hear your voice; for your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely. Catch for us the foxes, the little foxes that ruin the vineyards, our vineyards that are in bloom.

(Beloved) My lover is mine and I am his; he browses among the lilies. Until the day breaks and the shadows flee, turn, my lover, and be like a gazelle or like a young stag on the rugged hills.

### **Song of Solomon 3:4**

(Beloved) Scarcely had I passed them when I found the one my heart loves. I held him and would not let him go till I had brought him to my mother's house, to the room of the one who conceived me.

### **Song of Solomon 4:1-7, 9-11, 15-16**

(Lover) How beautiful you are, my darling! Oh, how beautiful! Your eyes behind your veil are doves.

Your hair is like a flock of goats descending from Mount Gilead. Your teeth are like a flock of sheep just shorn, coming up from the washing. Each has its twin; not one of them is alone. Your lips are like a scarlet ribbon; your mouth is lovely. Your temples behind your veil are like the halves of a pomegranate. Your neck is like the tower of David, built with elegance; on it hang a thousand shields, all of them shields of warriors. Your two breasts are like two fawns, like twin fawns of a gazelle that browse among the lilies. Until the day breaks and the shadows flee, I will go to the mountain of myrrh and to the hill of incense. All beautiful you are, my darling; there is no flaw in you.

(Lover) You have stolen my heart, my sister, my bride; you have stolen my heart with one glance of your eyes, with one jewel of your necklace. How delightful is your love, my sister, my bride! How much more pleasing is your love than wine, and the fragrance of your perfume than any spice! Your lips drop sweetness as the honeycomb, my bride; milk and honey are under your tongue. The fragrance of your garments is like that of Lebanon.

(Lover) You are a garden fountain, a well of flowing water streaming down from Lebanon.

(Beloved) Awake, north wind, and come, south wind! Blow on my garden, that its fragrance may spread abroad. Let my lover come into his garden and taste its choice fruits.

### **Song of Solomon 5:1-5, 10-16**

(Lover) I have come into my garden, my sister, my bride; I have gathered my myrrh with my spice. I have eaten my honeycomb and my honey; I have drunk my wine and my milk.

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(Friends) Eat, O friends, and drink; drink your fill, O lovers.

(Beloved) I slept but my heart was awake. Listen! My lover is knocking: "Open to me, my sister, my darling, my dove, my flawless one. My head is drenched with dew, my hair with the dampness of the night." I have taken off my robe - must I put it on again? I have washed my feet - must I soil them again? My lover thrust his hand through the latch-opening; my heart began to pound for him. I arose to open for my lover, and my hands dripped with myrrh, on the handles of the lock.

(Beloved) My lover is radiant and ruddy, outstanding among ten thousand. His head is purest gold; his hair is wavy and black as a raven. His eyes are like doves by the water streams, washed in milk, mounted like jewels. His cheeks are like beds of spice yielding perfume. His lips are like lilies dripping with myrrh. His arms are rods of gold set with chrysolite. His body is like polished ivory decorated with sapphires. His legs are pillars of marble set on bases of pure gold. His appearance is like Lebanon, choice as its cedars. His mouth is sweetness itself; he is altogether lovely. This is my lover, this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.

### **Song of Solomon 6:1-3**

(Friends) Where has your lover gone, most beautiful of women? Which way did your lover turn, that we may look for him with you?

(Beloved) My lover has gone down to his garden, to the beds of spices, to browse in the gardens and to gather lilies. I am my lover's and my lover is mine; he browses among the lilies.

### **Song of Solomon 7:1-13**

(Lover) How beautiful your sandaled feet, O prince's daughter! Your graceful legs are like jewels, the work of a craftsman's hands. Your navel is a rounded goblet that never lacks blended wine. Your waist is a mound of wheat encircled by lilies. Your breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle. Your neck is like an ivory tower. Your eyes are the pools of Heshbon by the gate of Bath Rabbim. Your nose is like the tower of Lebanon looking toward Damascus. Your head crowns you like Mount Carmel. Your hair is like royal tapestry; the king is held captive by its tresses. How beautiful you are and how pleasing, O love, with your delights! Your stature is like that of the palm and your breasts like clusters of fruit. I said, "I will climb the palm tree; I will take hold of its fruit." May your breasts be like the clusters of the vine, the fragrance of your breath like apples, and your mouth like the best wine.

(Beloved) May the wine go straight to my lover, flowing gently over lips and teeth. I belong to my lover, and his desire is for me. Come, my lover, let us go to the countryside, let us spend the night in the villages. Let us go early to the vineyards to see if the vines have budded, if their blossoms have opened, and if the pomegranates are in bloom - there I will give you my love. The mandrakes send out their fragrance, and at our door is every delicacy, both new and old, that I have stored up for you, my lover.

**Song of Solomon 8:7, 10, 14**

(Beloved) Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot wash it away. If one were to give all the wealth of his house for love, it would be utterly scorned.

(Beloved) I am a wall, and my breasts are like towers. Thus I have become in his eyes like one bringing contentment.

(Beloved) Come away, my lover, and be like a gazelle or like a young stag on the spice-laden mountains.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Malachi 2:14-16**

You ask, "Why?" It is because the Lord is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth, because you have broken faith with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant. Has not the Lord made them one? In flesh and spirit they are his. And why one? Because he was seeking godly offspring. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth. **"I hate divorce," says the Lord God of Israel,** "and I hate a man's covering himself with violence as well as with his garment," says the Lord Almighty. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Matthew 19:3-9**

Some Pharisees came to him to test him. They asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?" "Haven't you read," He [Jesus] replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate." "Why then," they asked, "did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?" Jesus replied, "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way **from the beginning.** I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman, commits adultery."

\* \* \* \* \*

**Romans 7:2-3**

For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law of marriage. So then, if she marries another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from the law and is not an adulteress, even though she marries another man.

**Romans 13:1b**

... there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.

\* \* \* \* \*

**1 Corinthians 2:9**

However, as it is written: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him."

**1 Corinthians 6:18-20**

Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, Who is in you, Whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

**1 Corinthians 7:1-5, 10-11, 39**

Now for the matters you wrote about: It is good for a man not to marry. But since there is so much immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband. **The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband.** The wife's body does not belong to her alone, but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife. **Do not deprive each other** except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband. But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife.

A woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but he must belong to the Lord.

**1 Corinthians 11:3, 11-12**

Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.

In the Lord, however, man is not independent of woman, nor is woman independent from man. For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God.

**1 Corinthians 13:4-8a**

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.

**2 Corinthians 6:14-16a [The “Equal Yoke Principle”]**

Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God.

**Galatians 5:22-23**

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Ephesians 4:29-32**

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

**Ephesians 5:21-33**

Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, His body, of which He is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the Word, and to present her to Himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church - for we are members of His body. "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." This is a profound mystery - but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

**Philippians 4:4-9, 11-13, 19**

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable - if anything is excellent or

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praiseworthy - think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me - put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through Him who gives me strength.

And my God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

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**Colossians 3:18-19**

Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them.

\* \* \* \* \*

**1 Timothy 3:2, 4, 12**

Now the overseer must be ... the husband of but one wife, ... He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect.

A deacon must be the husband of but one wife and must manage his children and his household well.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Titus 2:1-8**

You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine. Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance. Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God. Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled. In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.

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**Hebrews 13:4**

Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.

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### 1 Peter 3:1-7

Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the Word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear. Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

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Please **CHOOSE** to apply God's Biblical instruction to your marriage.

## APPENDIX B

### A GUARANTEE OF HEAVEN - HOW TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN

#### INTRODUCTION

In Appendix A I quoted numerous verses from the Bible which relate to marriage. I began Chapter 2, **Having Your Spiritual House in Order**, by stating that the Scriptural principles quoted in Appendix A would not be accepted by the person who is not a believer in Jesus Christ. I said further that these truths are foolishness to the unbeliever and that the person who is not a true Christian cannot understand them. In Chapter 3, **Christ in the Center of the Home**, I stated that many of the principles that I present in this book can be applied only if the husband and wife have been born again (i.e. true, regenerated Christians).

Therefore, it is very relevant that the reader understands what I mean when I say that a person is "a Christian," or is "a believer" or that a person must be "born again." I wrote this book primarily for my precious daughters, Nikki and Laura, who are Christians and who married fine Christian men and all of them are walking in obedience to Him. I recognize that it is possible that at some point a person who is not a true Christian will receive a copy of this book. Apart from God's illumination of that unbeliever's mind to receive the capacity to understand the Bible truths about salvation only through Jesus Christ, that unbeliever is spiritually blind. To the person who is not sure that he or she has ever really accepted Christ I say, ***I beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God by CHOOSING to place your faith in Jesus Christ as your Savior.***

#### SOME IMPORTANT QUESTIONS TO PONDER

If something is true, you want to know the truth, don't you? Doesn't it make sense to honestly seek truth? I suggest that the following prayer is a legitimate approach to this inquiry. "Dear God, **IF** the Bible is true, and **IF** Jesus Christ really is the Savior of the world, and **IF** there is a way for me to obtain spiritual life, **THEN**, dear God, you have to show me that it is true. Will you please open and illumine my mind and heart to understand the gospel?"

Hey, what do you have to lose? If the Gospel is true, then you most certainly want to know the truth. If it really is true that a person goes to hell if he dies without ever having received Jesus Christ as Savior, then you certainly want to choose the way that will save you from perishing, right? If there truly is a way to get to heaven, then you want to choose to go that way, don't you? If God is real and alive and if God has made a way for you to be a member of the family of God, don't you want to join God's family? If God is who He says He is, why not put Him to the test? Why not open your mind to honestly consider the Gospel of Jesus Christ? If it is true, then certainly God is powerful enough to prove Himself to you and show you what and how to believe. Wouldn't you agree with that?

Listen, if the Gospel is not true, then you will be no worse off for having honestly considered what the Bible has to say about Jesus Christ, heaven, hell, and how to be saved. On the other

hand, if the Gospel is true, then you most definitely want to know that truth and you need to act upon it.

### **THE GOSPEL, THE GOOD NEWS OF JESUS CHRIST.**

Simply stated the Gospel is that Jesus Christ died for our sins according to the Scripture, and He was buried, and He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). Opening one's heart to receive Jesus Christ begins with a **CHOICE**. If you confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead you shall be saved. You have the absolute promise that whoever will call upon the name of the name of Lord will be saved (Romans 10:9, 13).

Let me explain in more detail. We start with God himself. God is so much greater than any human can comprehend, the only way we can know God or know about God is to read and consider what God Himself **revealed** in the Bible, the inspired word of God. God is perfect, holy, and just. God has infinite love while at the same time demanding total and perfect justice. God created the world and all of the universe. God created all living creatures. God created human beings, male and female. At the time God created humans there was no sin in the world and those first humans were themselves sinless. God gave them work to do and he gave them the freedom of choice. God gave to them a very specific prohibition. Those first humans had a choice to either obey God or disobey God. When they chose to disobey God that was sin. Sin is any thought, attitude, word or action that is contrary to God's character, will, commands or instruction.

Because God is perfectly holy He cannot even look upon sin, and there can be no fellowship between the perfect and righteous God, on the one hand, and any person who bears the curse of sin, on the other hand. When our ancient forefather sinned, the immediate effects were separation from God, spiritual death and imminent physical death. The human race was left without spiritual life and the fellowship with God was severed. Because of such spiritual death of the parents, they had no spiritual life to pass on to their children. All people thereafter have been born spiritually dead. Once physical life ends the person remains spiritually dead and he or she is also physically dead. God's punishment for sin is death and eternal torment in hell. God's declared punishment is absolutely required by the just God unless that sin is paid for and covered according to God's revealed requirements.

The omniscient God provided that there must be a sufficient blood sacrifice to cover sins. Since God declared that the penalty for sin is death and that there will be no covering of sins without the shedding of blood, then in order to pay for and cover sins there would need to be an object of sacrifice to receive such death penalty and to shed its blood. Such object of sacrifice would need to be totally sinless and perfect in order to provide the payment of the death penalty and such blood covering for sins of **OTHERS**. Without such sinless perfection the object of the sacrifice would be paying the death penalty and shedding its blood for its **own** sin, which would automatically mean that such sacrifice could not be made to pay the death penalty for the sins of others.

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This left the human race with a terrible predicament. Because all people have sinned and come short of God's glory, all people were already spiritually dead and they were headed for physical death. Moreover there was no human being who was ever born who could serve as the sufficient sacrifice to pay the death penalty for the sins of anyone else. All humans were therefore separated from God and there was absolutely nothing by way of human effort that any person could do in order to receive spiritual life or to avoid the death penalty for sin. Human efforts through goodness, kindness, beauty, strength, education, intelligence, power, position, philosophy or science could not and cannot achieve spiritual life or remove the death penalty for sin. God would never diminish His character of perfect holiness and righteous by allowing a person with sin to even be present in His heaven. Furthermore God's perfect righteousness and justice could never allow any sin to go unpunished.

Allow me to paint a word picture to emphasize the magnitude of God's love in giving Jesus Christ to die in full satisfaction of the death penalty for sin and to provide the blood covering for sins. The following illustration also helps to show how low God the Son stooped in order that we might understand God and that we might have a way to obtain spiritual life.

Think of your own kitchen table. Of course your table has no life. It cannot hear, move, think or reason. Wouldn't it be ridiculous for you to go up to your table and command your table to walk and then for you to proceed to explain with all diligence and eloquence the techniques of how to walk. Will the table understand how to walk? Or will the table do what you tell the table to do in order to walk? Of course not. This is because the table does not have life and it has no capacity to understand human words, instructions or reasoning. Your lifeless kitchen table is so far below you in character, being, life, power, intelligence and reasoning that it would be hopeless and silly to attempt to somehow bring your ways, thoughts and instruction down to a level of that table. Furthermore, because the table has no life you never could expect the table to understand or respond as if it did have life.

The gap between humans and God Almighty is infinitely greater than the gap between you and your kitchen table. Your kitchen table has no physical life and there is nothing that your kitchen table can do to attain life. A person without Christ is spiritually dead and there is nothing that person can do by his or her own works to attain spiritual life. Even if you surmised that your table wanted to fully understand the mechanics and techniques of walking you certainly would not sit down next to your table and give comprehensive instructions to that effect because you already know that your table does not have the capacity to understand those things. We humans are finite beings. Our reasoning and intelligence have a finite limit. It is logically ridiculous to expect that the infinite and omniscient God would declare to humans all that can be known about God, His ways and His thoughts. God certainly knows the limits of our pea-brains and would not go through the meaningless activity of telling humans things that He already knows that humans do not have a capacity to comprehend.

The all-wise and all-knowing God determined His perfect standards, and He determined forever the penalty for sin. God decided exactly how much and what He would reveal to humans, which is what is contained in the Bible. Everything God revealed in the Bible is true regardless of whether humans can fully understand it due to limited brain power and capacity. In other words, many things about God, God's ways and God's thoughts remain a mystery to us because God

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chose not to reveal them or explain them. Even part of what God did reveal we find difficult to understand. That brings us to a **CHOICE**. Humans have to choose to believe God's Word, backed by the very character of God, or to choose to disbelieve it. The Christian has the capacity to understand the Bible because the Christian has spiritual life and the Christian has the Holy Spirit resident within him or her to illuminate and teach the meaning of God's word.

One of these mysteries that transcends human understanding is the declared fact of the **triune God**. It is true because God declared it to be true. However, the full grasp of the Trinity is beyond our capacity to understand. God is one. There are three persons in the Godhead - God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ has always been God. He was God before that first Christmas in Bethlehem. He is God to this day. For approximately thirty-three years Jesus Christ voluntarily laid aside the full glory of being God by taking the form of a human. When Jesus Christ stooped to become the God-man His condescension was far greater than if a human being could somehow voluntarily give up his physical life, powers, abilities, intelligence and reasoning to take the form, lifelessness and powerlessness of that kitchen table.

This brings us back to the desperate need of the human race which was without spiritual life and without any sufficient sacrifice to pay the death penalty for sin. The perfection, righteousness and justice of God require that He obtain the punishment that He had declared for sin. None of the spiritually lifeless humans could provide payment of that penalty for anyone else. God's infinite love was displayed as God Himself chose to give Himself in full payment for the death penalty required by God Himself.

God the Father sent God the Son to be the Savior of the world. The method chosen by God is mysterious and wonderful. When God the Son took the form of humanity Jesus, in pre-birth human form was placed into the womb of a young virgin named Mary. That little baby had none of Mary's cells. As a virgin Mary had received none of Joseph's cells. That little Person in the womb of Mary was Jesus Christ in the form of a living unborn baby. Mary gave birth to Jesus as a human baby. Joseph and Mary raised Jesus as their son even though Jesus was not actually the biological child of either parent. Jesus grew up just like other children with one important distinction. Never did Jesus sin in any way. Jesus never sinned in his thoughts, words, attitudes or actions. While Jesus learned obedience, encountered temptations, pains and struggles, He remained without blemish. By the time Jesus was twelve years old the scholars, teachers and leaders were amazed at His understanding. Jesus grew and became strong. He was filled with wisdom and the grace of God was upon Him. He learned the trade of carpentry from His father and Jesus became a tradesman and businessman.

At the right time Jesus left the carpentry business to begin His ministry as a prophet, teacher and perfect example for humans. **BUT** that was not the ultimate purpose for which Jesus Christ, the Son of God, had come to this world. The reason Jesus came was to shed his blood and to suffer death to pay the death penalty for the sins of the world. Jesus Christ was in fact the Messiah (i.e. the Christ) which God had promised to the Jews many, many years before. The Jews did not understand God's teaching in the written Word which they possessed (what is now the Old Testament of the Bible). The Jews were looking for a Messiah who would be a powerful king of a human government and who would release the Jews from the bondage of foreign governments.

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The Jews had ignored or could not understand what the Old Testament plainly taught about the Christ coming to suffer and die and thereby to save his people.

It was only a period of about three and one-half years from the time Jesus began his ministry with the selection of His disciples until the date of His awful death on the cross. During much of that time Jesus was extremely popular. More and more people flocked to Jesus as He performed many miracles and healed many people.

The Jewish leaders hated Jesus Christ because he declared his deity. They considered Jesus' statements of His equality with God to be blasphemy which was punishable by death. Even though the Jewish leaders could not deny that Jesus was performing miracles, such miracles did not lead them to believe in Jesus. Those Jewish leaders had hard and selfish hearts and they were filled with envy and a passion to kill Jesus Christ.

A small fraction of the activities and teachings of Jesus Christ during that three and one-half years is recorded in the New Testament of the Bible. Every account and record in the Bible is historically correct. Part of the recorded history of the God-man, Jesus Christ, is the record of the actual words of Jesus Himself. During His time on earth Jesus declared and acknowledged that He was the Messiah, the way, the truth, the life, the light of the world, the bread of life, the Son of God, the Son of Man, I AM, the great physician, the true vine, the shepherd, the resurrection and the life, and the exclusive way for anyone to come to God. Jesus declared that if anyone would see Jesus they would see God the Father and if anyone knew Jesus they would know God the Father also. Jesus warned clearly that anyone who does not believe in Jesus is already judged, shall never see life, and will perish with the wrath of God abiding on him. Jesus promised that whoever would believe in Jesus would have eternal life, and that there was absolutely no other way to obtain spiritual life than by believing in Jesus Christ.

Jesus told people that soon he would be arrested, mistreated, crucified and killed. He stated also that on the third day He would rise from the dead. Jesus declared that He was the bread of life, that no one could come to Christ unless God the Father would draw him, and that whoever would eat Jesus' flesh and drink Jesus' blood (speaking of faith in Christ and partaking of Christ's sacrificial death to save sinners) would have eternal life. Many considered these to be hard sayings. As Jesus taught these truths, and as He repeated the prophecy about His coming death and resurrection many people departed. Jesus explained that even His followers would suffer persecution, trials and hatred from others. Many more people departed. Finally there was left only a small band of disciples and followers. To this small group Jesus imparted special instructions and promises. Jesus promised that He was going to prepare a place in heaven so that people who believe in Jesus would be able to join Him there forever. Jesus promised that He would send the Holy Spirit as comforter, teacher and guide. Jesus also promised that in the future He would come again in power and majesty.

The hatred of the Jewish leaders grew while the support from the masses diminished. The Jewish leaders made their plot to kill Jesus. One of the disciples was an evil man who had fooled everyone except for Jesus. Jesus knew that Judas Iscariot was not a true believer and that Judas would betray Jesus. Judas entered into a conspiracy with the Jewish leaders to identify and arrest Jesus. That devilish plan was in the works while Jesus was meeting with His disciples for the

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Last Supper. After Judas left Jesus gave very special instruction to the disciples and led them in prayer. From there Jesus and the disciples went out to the garden.

As foretold by Jesus, Judas Iscariot arrived to carry out the betrayal. There was an army with Judas. Jesus could not have been captured if He had not voluntarily allowed it. Just before Jesus' arrest the mob said that they were looking for Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus demonstrated that He remained in total power and control of the events when He said, "I am He," and those very words from God the Son knocked to the ground that detachment of soldiers, along with the officials and Pharisees. Jesus instructed His own disciples not to fight. Jesus voluntarily submitted to the illegal arrest. All of the disciples fled and Jesus was led away to be mocked, spat upon, mistreated, ridiculed, and tortured. There were a series of illegal sham "trials." Even though the Roman authorities could find no guilt in Jesus, they bowed to the demands of the Jews that Jesus be crucified. Pontius Pilate approved the crucifixion of the One who was indeed the King of the Jews and Savior of mankind.

They stripped Jesus of His clothes, laid His body on a wooden cross, and drove spikes through His hands and feet. The Roman soldiers then raised Jesus on that cross. There at Calvary Jesus suffered the most painful and agonizing form of execution. The arrest, the mistreatment, the mocking, the crucifixion, and ultimately the death of Jesus Christ were all in fulfillment of prophecy that had been recorded hundreds of years previously. Those events were also exactly as Jesus has prophesied and promised. That pain, torment and death was actually the fulfillment of the purpose for Jesus coming to this world. Jesus would not do anything to avoid the coming punishment and death even though He was sinless, perfect, and there was no crime or sin for which He should be required to shed His blood or suffer death. Greater than the physical agony was the horror and pain of the punishment for all sins being laid upon Jesus and the separation from God the Father. On that cross God the Son shed His blood to be the covering for sins. Because Jesus had never sinned He did not need to pay that penalty or shed that blood for His own sins. Jesus Christ was therefore the perfect substitute to take the death penalty for sins in the place of others (including you).

Jesus voluntarily gave up His spirit. Jesus died. He was buried in a tomb. On the third day Jesus Christ arose from death just as He had promised. That was the first Easter. Jesus was alive. Jesus is alive today and seated at the right hand of God the Father. After Jesus rose from the dead He showed Himself to His disciples and followers. There were hundreds of people who saw Jesus Christ alive again. With so many witnesses there could be no believable denial that Jesus Christ has risen in victory over death. Jesus had completely fulfilled the will of God and the very purpose for His coming to earth.

Jesus had provided a way for people who were without spiritual life to obtain such spiritual life. By His death Jesus had fully paid the price for the sins of the world. By His death and resurrection Jesus Christ made the only way for people to be saved. By His death and resurrection Jesus established the exclusive and narrow way for people to come into fellowship with the perfect and righteous God Almighty. The work of Jesus Christ at Calvary was sufficient for God to credit perfect righteousness to the account of any person who believes in Jesus Christ. The death of Jesus Christ removed the barrier of sin between the Holy God and anyone who will place his or her faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus' sacrificial death was the payment in full of the price

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of sin whereby Jesus Christ purchased believers out of the slave market of sin. Jesus Christ's substitutionary death provided the means for spiritual life and a spiritual nature to every person who receives Jesus Christ. The sins of man were forgiven and covered. The justice of God was satisfied.

The resurrected Jesus Christ remained on earth for forty days after he was raised from the dead. Then Jesus Christ ascended up in the sky and out of sight as a crowd of witnesses watched in amazement. The people who saw that ascension were the band of people to whom Jesus Christ had committed His truth and the ministry to reach out to the entire world with the Good News that there is salvation and spiritual life available because of the completed work of Jesus Christ on the Cross of Calvary. Since that day Jesus Christ has been building His Church, which includes all true Christians down through the ages. Every person who has chosen to believe and trust in Jesus has been saved for eternity. Jesus Himself promised that whoever would believe in Jesus Christ would not perish but have eternal life.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. True believers in Old Testament days looked forward to the coming Christ and were saved by placing their faith in Him. Since the resurrection of Jesus Christ there has still been only one way for a human being to obtain spiritual life. That exclusive way to escape the death penalty for sin is to receive Jesus Christ as Savior. The only way to have sins covered and forgiven is to appropriate that shed blood of Jesus Christ by placing your faith in Him.

**QUESTION:** How do I do that? You receive Jesus Christ by **CHOOSING** to accept the free gift of salvation He provides. You cannot work to earn it. You cannot be good enough to deserve it. Your kitchen table has no capacity to gain human life and enter into human fellowship with you. In the same vein there is nothing you can do on your own, using your ways, to reach Almighty God or to enter into His fellowship. By faith you must **CHOOSE** to follow the exclusive way declared and revealed by God. That way is Jesus Christ.

I will be as practical and as instructive as I can be. God will never lie. God chose to reveal His truth to us in the Bible. God has revealed to us the truth about Jesus Christ, including His reasons for coming to this world and His reasons for dying. God has revealed to us that Jesus Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. Jesus did it all. Jesus paid it all. The **CHOICE** is simply whether you will believe and trust in Jesus Christ. Please read and study the Bible verses quoted below. I challenge you to put God to His Word. If this is true then surely God is great and loving enough to help you to understand. Then you must make your **CHOICE**. The invitation to accept Jesus Christ and thereby obtain spiritual life forever, cleansing from sin, and entrance into the family of God, is available for the taking. But God will not force you to make that **CHOICE**.

After you have studied the verses below, please think about the following important statements concerning your **CHOICE**. To all who receive Jesus Christ, i.e. to those who believe in the name of Jesus Christ, God gave the right to become children of God. No one can see the kingdom of God unless he or she is born again. Whoever believes in Jesus Christ shall not perish but have eternal life. Whoever rejects Jesus Christ will not see life, but God's wrath

remains on him. If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead, you will be saved. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ will be saved. Now is the acceptable time to receive Jesus Christ. Behold, now is the day of salvation. You do not know what your life will be tomorrow. If you put off receiving Jesus Christ today, you may not have the chance tomorrow. If you die without receiving Jesus Christ as your Savior, you will be separated eternally from God – you will go to hell forever.

**Will you CHOOSE to accept and receive Jesus Christ as your Savior?**

When a person receives Jesus Christ it is the **beginning** of his or her spiritual life. Becoming a Christian is the **beginning** of a life of growing in the relationship with the Lord. The instant a person receives Jesus Christ the Holy Spirit takes up residence in him or her and for the first time in the life of that new believer, the Holy Spirit will be comforting, guiding, teaching and leading.

Before choosing to receive Jesus Christ you really do not need to know any more about Jesus Christ and how to become a Christian than what you have read above and what is quoted below from the Bible. Jesus is standing at the door of your heart and knocking. He has promised that if you will open up the door to your heart and life and receive Him in, then He will come in. You do not need to clean up your life or get your act together before receiving Jesus Christ. Without the Lord you do not even have the power to avoid sin. Jesus is calling you to come to Him just as you are and to enter into a new life with Him. I beg you, on behalf of God, to be reconciled to God Almighty by receiving Jesus Christ as your Savior. **Will you receive the Lord right now, right where you are?**

I am going to provide a simple prayer for you to use as a guide in receiving Jesus Christ. It all comes down to your **CHOICE**. You believe in Jesus by **CHOOSING** to believe in Jesus. You place your faith in Jesus Christ by **CHOOSING** to place your faith in Jesus Christ. I invite you to rely on God to help you, in the best way you know how, to pray a simple prayer like this from your heart to God.

**Dear God, I CHOOSE to believe that the Bible is true in what it says about You and Your perfect justice and holiness. I CHOOSE to believe that everyone has sinned and fallen short of Your glory. I admit that I have sinned. I CHOOSE to believe that the punishment for sin is death. I realize that I have no spiritual life yet. I also know that I cannot save myself from the death penalty that I deserve for sin. I CHOOSE to believe in Jesus Christ. I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. I believe that Jesus Christ stepped out of Heaven and took the form of man in order to be the perfect substitute to take upon Himself the death penalty for the sins of the world, including my sins. I believe that Jesus Christ was crucified and that He died. I believe that Jesus Christ was buried and that on the third day He arose from the dead. I believe that Jesus Christ is alive today as the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, seated at the right hand of God the Father. I take You at Your Word, Lord, that when I now call upon Your name You will save me and cleanse me from my sins. Therefore, Lord Jesus, in the best way I know how, I invite You to come to me. I receive You, Lord Jesus, as my Savior. I give my life to You. Thank You for saving me. This I pray in Your Name, Lord. Amen.**

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If you prayed that prayer sincerely from your heart to God, you **ARE SAVED !** I recommend that you go back and read the verses that I have quoted below which will remind you of the security you have and the spiritual life which you now enjoy. Study John 5:24; 6:35; 10:14; Ephesians 1:13; Philippians 4:19; 2 Timothy 1:12; 1 John 4:17 and 5:11-13. **WELCOME TO THE FAMILY OF GOD !**

If you prayed to receive Christ I recommend that you write down today's date as the day that you were born again. I urge you to immediately find a Bible-believing church where you can receive instruction, support and Christian fellowship. Tell some people that you are saved and how you prayed to receive Christ as your Savior.

Guess what !? If you just received Jesus Christ, then for the first time in your life you will have the capacity to more fully understand the Bible under the teaching and illumination of the Holy Spirit. Between now and when you step into Heaven, you have the opportunity to sit at the foot of the great Teacher Himself. God will unlock His mysteries to you that are hidden to unbelievers. [One of those beautiful areas of instruction that you will now be able to understand more clearly from the Bible is how to have a happy and God-honoring marriage, the subject of this book].

**WARNING** – If you **CHOOSE** not to place your faith and trust in Jesus Christ to save you, then you are in great danger. Your heart can grow colder and colder to the things of God. You cannot assume you will have more chances before you die. You see, even if you **CHOOSE** not to believe it, God says that God Himself appoints the time you will die, and after that comes the judgment (Hebrews 9:27; Job 14:5).

So **PLEASE** stop. Reconsider. Now is the acceptable time to receive Jesus Christ. Please **CHOOSE** to do so now.

### **SALVATION THROUGH FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST**

Carefully read and consider the following quotations from the Holy Scriptures:

#### **Psalms 14:1**

The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, their deeds are vile; there is no one who does good. The Lord looks down from heaven on the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God. All have turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one. [The atheist is a fool. 100% of people are sinners]

#### **1 John 4:9 & 10**

This is how God showed his love among us: He sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. [Jesus is God's love-gift]

#### **Luke 15:7 & 10** (Jesus speaking)

"I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent. . . . In the same way, I

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tell you there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."  
[Repent]

### **Romans 3:23**

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. [100% of people are sinners]

### **Habakkuk 1:13a**

Your [God's] eyes are too pure to look on evil; You [God] cannot tolerate wrong. [God's holy justice]

### **Romans 6:23**

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. [God's penalty is spiritual death (hell)]

### **Ephesians 2:12, 13**

Remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. [Jesus is the bridge to God]

### **2 Corinthians 5:17-20**

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come ! All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And He has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.

### **Romans 5:6-10**

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by His blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through Him ! For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to Him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through His life !

### **Romans 6:10**

The death He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life He lives, He lives to God. [Jesus died for your sins]

### **1 Peter 3:18**

For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit. [Jesus shed His blood for you]

**1 Peter 2:21-25**

To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in His steps. "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in His mouth." When they hurled their insults at Him, He did not retaliate; when He suffered, He made no threats. Instead, He entrusted Himself to Him who judges justly. He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by His wounds you have been healed. For you were like "sheep" going astray, but now you have returned to "the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls."

**Hebrews 1:2-3**

But in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, and through whom He made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being, sustaining all things by His powerful Word. After He had provided purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

**Luke 19:10** (Jesus speaking)

"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost." [You]

**John 4:23** (Jesus speaking)

"That all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent Him."

**Hebrews 7:25**

Therefore He is able to save completely those who come to God through Him, because He always lives to intercede for them. [Come]

**James 4:8**

Come near to God and He will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinner, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. [Come]

**Luke 11:9, 10** (Jesus speaking)

"So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened." [Come to Jesus and be saved]

**John 1:1, 14**

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God . . . The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. [Jesus is God]

**John 3:16-18** (Jesus speaking)

"For God so loved the world that He gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son." [Avoid hell, and obtain eternal life, by faith in Jesus]

**John 5:17-24**

Jesus said to them. "My Father is always at His work to this very day, and I, too, am working." For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill Him; not only was He breaking the Sabbath, but He was even calling God his own Father, making Himself equal with God. Jesus gave them this answer: "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by Himself; He can do only what He sees His Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. For the Father loves the Son and shows Him all He does. Yes, to your amazement He will show him even greater things than these. For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom He is pleased to give it. Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent Him. I tell you the truth, whoever hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life." [Jesus is God. You cannot honor God if you reject Jesus]

**John 6:37** (Jesus speaking)

"All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and whoever comes to Me I will never drive away." [Secure]

**John 6:39-40** (Jesus speaking)

"And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that I shall lose none of all that He has given Me, but raise them up at the last day. For My Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in Him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."

**John 8:12**

When Jesus spoke again to the people, He said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." [Salvation is only through Jesus]

**John 8:19**

Then they asked Him, "Where is your father?" "You do not know Me or my Father," Jesus replied. "If you knew Me, you would know My Father also." [Jesus is God]

**John 10:9** (Jesus speaking)

"I am the gate; whoever enters through Me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture." [Salvation is only through Jesus]

**John 10:25-33**

Jesus answered, "I did tell you, but you do not believe. The miracles I do in My Father's name speak for Me, but you do not believe because you are not My sheep. My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow Me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of My Father's hand. I and the Father are one. Again the Jews picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus said to them, "I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone Me?" "We are not stoning you for any of these," replied the Jews, "but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God." [Jesus open declared that He is God]

**John 11:25-26**

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?" [Salvation]

**John 12:44-45**

Then Jesus cried out, "When a man believes in Me, he does not believe in Me only, but in the one who sent Me. When he looks at Me, he sees the One who sent Me." [Faith in Jesus]

**John 12:46** (Jesus speaking)

"I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in Me should stay in darkness." [Salvation is through faith in Jesus]

**John 13:1**

It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for Him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved His own who were in the world, He now showed them the full extent of His love.

**John 14:6**

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." [Jesus is the ONLY way]

**John 16:22** (Jesus speaking)

"So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy."

**John 17:11** (Jesus speaking)

"I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of Your name - the name You gave Me - so that they may be one as we are one."

**John 1:12**

Yet to all who received him [Jesus], to those who believed in his [Jesus'] name, he gave the right to become children of God. [Saved]

**John 3:18** (Jesus speaking)

"Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son." [Faith in Jesus results in salvation. Rejection of Jesus results in hell]

**John 3:36**

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life [heaven], but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him [hell forever].

**Galatians 2:16**

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Know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified. [By faith]

### **Galatians 3:22**

But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe. [By faith]

### **Galatians 3:26**

You are all "sons of God" through faith in Christ Jesus. [By faith]

### **Ephesians 2:1, 4-9**

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, . . . But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions - it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages He might show the incomparable riches of His grace, expressed in His kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast. [God's grace; your faith; you cannot earn heaven]

### **Romans 4:16**

Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring - not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all.

### **Romans 5:1-2**

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into his grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. [By faith]

### **Romans 8:1**

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. [avoid God's punishment for your sin]

### **Romans 8:8**

Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.

### **Romans 8:34**

Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died - more than that, who was raised to life - is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

### **Romans 10:8, 17**

But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming, . . . Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ. [Faith in Jesus]

**Romans 10:9-13**

That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in Him will never be put to shame." For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile - the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." [Call on Jesus]

**II Corinthians 1:22**

God who set His seal of ownership on us, and put His spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. [Secure]

**Ephesians 1:13**

And you also were included in Christ when you heard the Word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit. [Secure]

**Ephesians 4:30**

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. [Secure]

**Philippians 1:6**

Being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. [Secure]

**Colossians 3:3**

For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. [New]

**II Timothy 1:12**

That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him for that day. [Secure]

**Hebrews 5:9**

And, once made perfect, He became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey Him.

**Hebrews 7:25**

Therefore He is able to save completely those who come to God through Him, because He always lives to intercede for them. [Secure]

**I Peter 1:5, 9**

Who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. . . for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

**I Peter 3:18**

For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit. [Jesus' death for your sins]

**Hebrews 9:27**

Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment.

**II Corinthians 6:2**

For He says, "In an acceptable time I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you." I tell you, now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation. [Receive Jesus Christ NOW!]

**Titus 1:2**

A faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time.

**Titus 3:4-7**

But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

**Hebrews 8:12**

For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more. [With salvation comes forgiveness and a "clean slate"]

**1 John 4:9-10**

In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

**1 John 4:13-17**

By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him. Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world.

**I John 5:10-13**

Anyone who believes in the Son of God has His testimony in his heart. Anyone who does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because he has not believed the testimony God has given about his Son. And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the son has life [saved]; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life [lost]. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that

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you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.

**Revelation 3:20** (Jesus speaking)

"Here I am ! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and open the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me."

\* \* \* \* \*

So there you have it directly from God Himself. You are a sinner. As God's punishment for your sin, God has already condemned you to hell forever, unless you will accept His free love-gift. Jesus is God the Son. The only way to have your sins forgiven, to gain spiritual life and eternal life, and to be in God's family, and to go to heaven, is to CHOOSE to place your faith and trust in Jesus Christ. Will you please receive Jesus Christ as your Savior now? It is heavenly!

**APPENDIX C**

**ACCOUNTABILITY QUESTIONS FOR MEN:**

1. How is my overall spiritual health? By God's grace, can it be said of me that I am a growing Christian whose first love is the Lord, and do I have a passion to know the Lord better and to serve, obey and bring glory to the Lord Jesus Christ?
2. Am I really striving to please the Lord in my life? How does that show?
3. Am I becoming more and more conformed into the image of the precious Lord Jesus Christ? In what ways?
4. Have I been totally honest? Have I engaged in any half-truths, falsehood, or misleading statements? Have I lied or misrepresented the full truth about any matter?
5. Have I honored God at work? Have I dealt with integrity and fairness in all my work and business relationships, and in all my statements and actions relating to all aspects of my work? Have I worked hard, as unto the Lord, being diligent and totally avoiding laziness and time-wasting?
6. Have I been kind, gracious and merciful to others? Have I harbored a spirit of unforgiveness, grudge-bearing or bitterness against anyone?
7. Have I hidden any sins? Is there any unconfessed sin in my life that I am unwilling to deal with? Have I refused to fully repent?
8. Have I been morally pure? Have I maintained purity in my thoughts, words, actions and relationships with women? Have I viewed or read any pornography, dirty books or other material which contains nudity or sexual content? Did I immediately flee from lust?
9. Have I honored God? Have I engaged in any conduct, words or thoughts which were dishonoring to the Lord? Do I believe that the Lord considers my thoughts, words and actions to have been consistent with God's Word and His Ways?
10. Did I give of myself, my time, my service, my gifts and talents to the Lord and to my local church? Have I faithfully met my financial and time commitments to my Church? Am I a cheerful and sacrificial giver?
11. How has my devotional life been? Have I spent quality time studying and meditating on the Word of God every day as a part of systematic Bible study? Have I meditated on the Scripture I have studied? Am I working on memorizing scripture?
12. How has my prayer life been? Have I prayed daily as a part of a disciplined, persistent and fervent prayer program? Do I have a plan for my work of prayer? Do I have a set-aside

## It's Your CHOICE – Accountability Questions for Men

- time and place for my prayer time? Have I remained in an attitude for immediate prayer at all times through the day?
13. Have I prayed for each member of my family every day? Have I kept current on their prayer requests and needs? Have I invested my time and energy into my family by giving undivided attention and time to the activities and interests of my family, family conversation, spiritual instruction of my family, and family recreation?
  14. Have I affirmatively planned and prayed about how to best lead, teach, nurture and support my family? Have I protected my family? How? Have I maintained a proper balance of priorities when considering my family and their needs and benefits, in relation to my work, activities, and friends away from my family?
  15. While being the head of my wife have I been totally submitted to Christ as my head? Have I loved my wife just as Christ has loved the church, and as I love my own body? Have I refrained from being harsh with my wife? Have I treated my wife with respect and recognized her as my joint heir of Christ's gracious gift of life?
  16. Have I honored my wife? Have I been totally loyal to my wife in every respect? Have I affirmed my wife and assisted her to be her best? Have I maintained excellent and God-honoring communication with my wife? Have I vigilantly guarded matters that should be kept strictly private between my wife and me? Have I taken the lead in romance and intimacy with my wife? Have I kept my wife as my best friend and my confidante?
  17. Have I taken captive my thoughts in obedience to Christ? Has my thought life been honoring to the Lord and have I refused to think or fantasize about themes of power, sexual misconduct, or materialism? Is the Lord pleased with my thoughts?
  18. Have I honored the Lord with my speech? Have I vigilantly guarded my tongue so that my speech is consistent with a sound commitment to the Lord and a clear testimony for Him? Have I avoided wrongful jokes, gossip, tongue-wagging, cutting others down, wrongful criticism, or the giving and receiving of bad reports about other Christians? Is the Lord pleased with my speech?
  19. Have I been actively involved in evangelism? Did I plan for the "who?", "when?" and "how?" of my evangelizing? Did I pray for opportunities to witness and for God's strength, guidance and effectiveness in evangelizing? Did I readily share my faith in Christ through personal evangelism and did I maintain and display a clear, evident Christian testimony?
  20. What is my grade in the areas of: (a) Christian character; (b) ethics; (c) morality; (d) integrity; and (e) willing obedience of the Lord's directives and instructions?
  21. Have I kept my relationship with the Lord vital, close and unhindered? When I sinned did I quickly seek the Lord to confess and to ask for forgiveness from the Lord and from anyone wronged or offended? Did I truly repent of each sin?

## **It's Your CHOICE – Accountability Questions for Men**

22. Have I been an example of a believer so as to encourage Christians and to attract unbelievers to the Lord? Can I honestly say, “Do as I do”?
23. Have I taken proper and God-honoring care of my body - which is the temple of the Holy Spirit - through exercising discipline in what and how much I ate and drank, and through exercise and proper nutrition?
24. Have I made choices that were totally in accord with God's Word and were clearly pleasing to God? Did I commit each significant matter to the Lord in prayer before making my choices?
25. Have I genuinely submitted to authority? (to the Lord and His Word, to my pastors and church leaders, to political rulers and the laws of the land, to others in authority over me.)
26. Do I have God's peace in my life and abundant joy in the Lord? How does that show?
27. Have I been humble? Have I rejected pride and selfishness? Am I a servant to the Lord, to my church and to others?
28. Have I hallowed God? Have I eliminated “idols” in my life to be sure that God is in fact number one in my life, in my attention, in my devotion, and in my desires?
29. Have I been careful and God-pleasing in my associations and in choosing my friends and counselors, and in deciding with whom I spend my time?
30. Have I maintained an attitude of conscious thankfulness to God, and have I often expressed my thanks to Him during my times of prayer? Have I been thankful to others and have I expressed that appreciation verbally or in writing to others?
31. Have I fulfilled with excellence my God-given roles, duties and responsibilities?...as a man, as a husband, as a son-in-law, as a father, as a grandfather, as a deacon, as an employer, as a member of my local church, as a friend, as a counselor?

**APPENDIX D**

**ACCOUNTABILITY QUESTIONS FOR WOMEN:**

1. How am I doing spiritually?
2. Am I striving to please the Lord?
3. Am I becoming more and more conformed into the image of the precious Lord Jesus Christ?
4. Have I honored God in my tasks at home and away? Have I dealt with integrity and fairness in all of my daily responsibilities, and relationships including my statements and actions?
5. Have I been gracious and merciful? Have I harbored a spirit of unforgiveness, grudge-bearing or bitterness against anyone?
6. Have I hidden sins? Is there any unconfessed sin in my life that I am unwilling to deal with?
7. Have I been morally pure? Have I maintained purity in my thoughts, words, actions and relationships with men? Have I engaged in any conduct, words or thoughts which were dishonoring to the Lord?
8. Have I faithfully met my financial and time commitments to the Lord, including my giving to and serving at my local church?
9. How has my devotional life been? Have I spent quality time studying and meditating on the Word of God every day as a part of systematic Bible study?
10. How has my prayer life been? Have I prayed daily as a part of a disciplined, persistent and fervent prayer program?
11. Have I prayed for each member of my family every day?
12. Have I affirmatively planned and prayed about how to minister to my family (for their spiritual, physical, and emotional needs and benefits)?
13. Have I kept my family as a priority? Have I invested my time and energy into my family by giving attention and time to the activities and interests of my family, family conversation, and family recreation? Have I provided a warm, loving atmosphere at home?
14. Have I protected my family? Have I maintained proper balance and priorities when considering my family and their needs and benefits in relation to work, activities, and friends away from my family?
15. Have I been totally honest? Have I engaged in any half-truths, falsehood, or misleading statements? Have I lied or misrepresented the full truth about any matter?

**It's Your CHOICE – Accountability Questions for Women**

16. Have I taken captive my thoughts in obedience to Christ? Has my thought life been honoring to the Lord and have I refused to think or fantasize about anything wrongful?
17. Have I honored the Lord with my speech? Have I vigilantly guarded my tongue so that my speech is consistent with a sound commitment to the Lord and have I avoided wrongful jokes, gossip, tongue-wagging, cutting others down, wrongful criticism, and the giving or receiving of bad reports about other Christians?
18. Was I involved in evangelism? Did I readily shared my faith in Christ through personal evangelism and did I maintain and display a clear, evident Christian testimony?
19. How is my overall spiritual health? By God's grace, can it be said of me that I am a growing Christian whose first love is the Lord and do I have a passion to serve, obey and bring glory to the Lord Jesus Christ?
20. What if my grade in the areas of: (a) Christian character; (b) ethics; (c) morality; (d) integrity; and (e) willing obedience of the Lord's directives and instructions.
21. Have I kept my relationship with the Lord close? When I sinned did I seek the Lord to confess and to ask for forgiveness? Did I truly repent?
22. Have I been an example of a believer so as to encourage Christians and to attract unbelievers to the Lord?
23. Have I taken God-honoring and proper care of my body which is the temple of the Holy Spirit through discipline what and how much I ate and drank, and through exercise and nutrition?
24. Have I made choices that were in accord with God's Word and were pleasing to God?

## APPENDIX E

### A FEW PRINCIPLES FOR CHRISTIAN LIVING

1. No matter what else is in your life, there is no relationship more important than your relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Nurture that relationship ... treasure it ... build it ... pray about it ... affirmatively plan on how you can enhance it. (Matthew 22:37-38; Revelation 2:4-5)
2. There is nothing more important in any day ... NOTHING . . . than having your quality, disciplined, quiet time with the Lord (systematic Bible study, meditation on the Word of God, and organized, persistent and fervent prayer). Any day in which you have spent significant time with the Lord in Bible study and prayer, and then live for the Lord, is a success regardless of what else happens. Any day in which you fail to have quality quiet time with the Lord is not a success, regardless of what else happens.
3. Seek the approval of God rather than trying to please men (Galatians 1:10). Be a God-pleaser, not a man-pleaser.
4. Fear God in your reverence to Him and in the urgency of your obligations to obey Him . . . do not fear men. (Psalm 27:1; Psalm 56:11; Psalm 118:6-9; Psalm 33:8; Proverbs 29:25 [Exodus 15:11; Genesis 22:12; Exodus 20:18-20; Leviticus 11:44-45])
5. In your choice of a life mate and in your choice of a business partner in any type of venture ***be equally yoked***. To be equally yoked is not simply that two people profess to be Christians. Even if both creatures pushing upon a yoke are oxen, if one oxen is intending in his heart to move in a different direction or at a different speed or for different purposes than the other, then the very purposes for being equally yoked will be compromised. (II Corinthians 6:14)
6. Take comfort that the Holy Spirit Himself is praying for you, and that the precious Lord Jesus Christ Himself is also interceding for you. (Romans 8:26; 8:34)
7. For a Christian, it is of the highest order to be the person God wants him or her to be, doing what God calls him or her to do. Once that is in order, then he or she must do that to which he or she has been called, to the glory of God. Specifically, be very sure in your heart that you are called from on high to be doing what you are doing at this time. With that calling settled and peaceful in your heart, do it to the glory of God.
8. ***Romans 8:28*** is not merely a pretty saying and it is not a trite expression to say to a person faced with difficulty or loss. It is one of the most practical, bedrock, faith-enhancing verses in all of Scripture. Know this verse, believe it, apply it in your own heart and life.
9. Be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil. (Romans 16:19; Jeremiah 4:22)

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10. In your speech to others, speak only what is helpful for building others up and for edification. (Ephesians 4:29)
11. Be excited about the reality that the Holy Spirit lives in you; that the Holy Spirit abides with you always; that the Holy Spirit always has His hands of help and comfort ready; that the Holy Spirit Himself will teach you spiritual wisdom from the Bible; and that the Holy Spirit Himself will guide your mind and heart as you plan for this day and for the days to come. Remembering all of those benefits, therefore, do not grieve or put out the Holy Spirit's fire in your life. (I Thessalonians 5:19; Ephesians 4:30-32; Psalm 139:7-10; I Corinthians 2:10-11; Acts 1:8; Romans 15:19; John 14:26; Acts 9:31; John 14:16-17; John 16:8; Romans 8:11; I Corinthians 6:19; Romans 5:5; Luke 12:12; I Corinthians 2:10-16; Jude 20; I John 4:1-6; Acts 9:31; Romans 8:9; Romans 14:17; Romans 15:16)
12. Always trust in God to keep His promises. Never waiver in your faith that God will keep His promises. Never entertain even the slightest doubt about God's faithfulness and integrity to keep His promises. (I Thessalonians 5:24; Ezekiel 36:36)
13. Be very careful about your thought life. It is a lie of Satan that says that we cannot control our thoughts. The Lord would not give us a command to do so, if He did not give us the ability to obey by His grace. (II Corinthians 10:5)
14. Press toward the goal for prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus and fix your eyes upon Jesus (Philippians 3:14; Hebrews 12:1,2)
15. If you ever have a need, ASK GOD, and in your asking, ask without doubting and ask with right motives. (James 4:2-3)
16. If there ever seems to be a time when you feel unloved, then meditate on this spiritual promise and reality: the eternal God is your refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms. (Deuteronomy 33:27)
17. Because God is the Rock eternal, you can know you are secure and you can have an unwavering trust and perfect peace. (Isaiah 26:3-7,12)
18. Anger, bitterness, fear and worry are all SELF-inflicted grief. God does not want you to fret. God does not allow you to be a worrier. Do not be anxious . . . do not worry. (I Peter 5:7; Matthew 6:25-34 [The imperative commands of Jesus Christ: "Do not worry about your life ... Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? . . . Oh you of little faith? Do not worry . . . Do not worry about tomorrow."])
19. In this life there is temptation. Temptation itself is not sin. *Entertaining* the temptation is sin. No Christian can ever say that, "The devil made me do it," or "I just could not help myself," or "The temptation was just too strong." No. God Himself has given us a guarantee that we will never be without sufficient help from Him to resist temptation and we will never be without a legitimate escape from every temptation to sin. (I Corinthians

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- 10:13). Also, you **already know** where the object of such temptation is . . . so do not go there. Instead . . . FLEE!!
20. The growing Christian is joyful. Our Christian testimony will not be effective if we are not joyful Christians. Indeed it is an insult to God and His bountiful shower of blessings upon us for us not to have joy *regardless* of the circumstances of the day. (Psalm 16:11; Psalm 21:6; John 3:29; John 15:11; John 17:13)
  21. Remember that **YOU** decide by your choices and by your obedient affirmative actions whether you will be an *instrument for noble purposes* and whether your life will be *effective and productive*. (II Timothy 2:20-21; II Peter 1:5-9)
  22. To live on the cutting edge for God you cannot wait until you see everything in place. You must be willing to take steps forward with the eyes of faith. (II Corinthians 5:7)
  23. In your very innermost being resolve that your highest **GOAL** is to please God. (II Corinthians 5:9; Proverbs 16:3)
  24. This life is short. It is merely a breath and it will be over. By contrast, eternity is unending. Walk in this brief life in light of eternity and fight the good fight. (I Timothy 1:18; II Timothy 4:7)
  25. If you are ever feeling a little timid or weak, read and meditate on II Timothy 1:7 . . . “For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and self-discipline [sound judgment].”
  26. It will be helpful for you to realize the profound truth of this simple little saying, **I can't . . . God can**. (II Corinthians 3:4-6)
  27. Apart from God you can do nothing (John 15:5). Depend on Him. Give Him all of the credit. However, you are never separated from the all-powerful God, and you can do all things through Christ who strengthens you. (Philippians 4:13)
  28. God expects you to put into practice what you learn from the Word. Get out of your chair and **do it!** (James 1:22; Luke 8:21)
  29. Be very quick to keep short accounts with God. If you sin, confess it and make it right with the Lord (I John 1:9). After you have truly confessed a sin and repented, **DO NOT** allow Satan to invade your mind with accusations and suggestions of further guilt. We have the special promise of God that He even cleans our conscience. So do not allow the enemy to make you “feel” like you failed to receive the beautiful and complete cleansing of God's forgiveness. (Hebrews 9:14)
  30. It is beneficial to your sense of security and safety to remember that God is always present and He is watching and He cares. (Proverbs 5:21)

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31. The Holy Spirit who resides in you can give you the words that you need to say no matter what the pressure or circumstances. Trust Him. (Luke 12:11-12)
32. Evaluate yourself regularly to check if you are becoming more and more conformed into the image of Christ. (I Corinthians 1:7-8; Romans 8:29)
33. You are on God's side (and He is on your side) and God will prevail. (Isaiah 42:13b; Psalm 56:9)
34. A gigantic and significant, yet simple, goal of life: "However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me - the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace." (Acts 20:24)
35. Do not allow any activity, thing or sin to enslave you or to become your master (I Corinthians 6:12). Jesus Christ has freed us from our sins by His blood. (Revelation 1:5)
36. Concerning your income and material possessions, be constantly reminded that you are merely a STEWARD . . . 100% of what you earn is brought by God . . . 100% of what you have is owned by God . . . and ask yourself this question: "How will I invest God's material resources for God's purposes and God's glory?"
37. You will do well to make as a life ministry to pray for missionaries. "I urge you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to JOIN ME IN MY STRUGGLE BY PRAYING TO GOD FOR ME." (This was the instruction of the great missionary Paul, Romans 15:30).
38. Do not accuse a man for no reason when he has done you no harm. (Proverbs 3:30). Instead, tend to yourself and your own life.
39. When a man's ways are pleasing to the Lord, he makes even his enemies live at peace with him. (Proverbs 16:7)
40. God gives His best to those who leave the choices with Him.
41. Your local church must be considered an important priority. Christ is building His Church. You will not receive God's ultimate benefits and blessing from your local church unless you give of yourself and of your means to the local body. As a member of your church, work for peace and harmony so long as it is not a compromise of actual Biblical truth. (Psalm 113:1)
42. Ask God to help you to be skillful in your vocation and to even provide supernatural help from above just as God called and empowered Bezalel and the skillful workmen. (Exodus 31:1-11; 28:3,15,27,28; 35:30-35; 36:1,8,35; Ephesians 4:1)
43. Do not take yourself too seriously. Be quick to laugh at yourself.
44. If you make a mistake, be quick to acknowledge it, and fix it.

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45. Do not strive to "make a name for YOURSELF." It is far more important to make the name of the Lord Jesus Christ known and glorified.
46. Do not joke around by putting someone down or trying to be funny at someone else's expense. It is not funny. It hurts. And only people with small characters do that.
47. There will be times when there is no one else besides you to do what needs to be done or to say what must be said. Do not shrink back from being God's person and being God's spokesman at those times.
48. The Christian should always have joy regardless of the circumstances. That is because joy rests upon our unchanging wonderful God Himself. But for the most part YOU ALSO **CHOOSE** whether you will be happy and you **CHOOSE** whether you will have a sense of well being. That is right. Happiness usually does not depend on circumstances. Happiness and a sense of well being are **CHOICES**. You **CHOOSE** whether you are intending to have a great day. You **CHOOSE** whether you're going to be looking up and pressing forward. You **CHOOSE** whether you will look at the cup as being half full or you will look at the cup as being half empty.
49. DO NOT accept or receive a bad report about a brother or sister in the Lord. It is an act of hatred and disloyalty to assume a wrong motive about the acts of a brother or sister in the Lord. Do not gossip about a Christian brother or sister and do not listen to someone who does. Do not serve as a magnet for malcontents or a clearing house for complainers. (I Corinthians 13:4-8; Proverbs 20:19, 25:23; Romans 1:29; II Corinthians 12:20; Psalms 34:13; John 3:5-12; Proverbs 10:19, 13:3; 15:2; 17:14,27; 21:23; 26:20-22)
50. Anger is self-inflicted grief and is foolish. **CHOOSE** to control your anger. (Proverbs 14:17, 29; 17:14,27; 20:3; 31:33)
51. Seek and obtain counsel from godly people. NOTE - the most important application of seeking counsel is to seek, obtain, and listen to the counsel of YOUR SPOUSE. (Proverbs 11:14; 12:15, 20b; 13:10, 20; 15:22; 19:20-21; 20:18; 24:5-6; 27:9,17)
52. **CHOOSE** to smile (again it is your **CHOICE**). (Proverbs 15:13,30; Proverbs 17:22)
53. We always and only live *today*. Tomorrow never comes. It is always today. That means that we must "work while there is yet light" and we must serve the Lord today. We dare not resign ourselves to waiting to really start serving the Lord until we are "settled" or we have accomplished a certain task, and on and on. No. We live and we serve today. No exceptions. Make today count for eternity.
54. Heaven and eternal life are glorious beyond degree. Imagine being in the presence of our precious Savior without the fetters, carnality and sinfulness of your earthly flesh. For a Christian to fear death is an absolute insult to God and to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ which

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gave us our glorious salvation and eternal life. For the Christian, his or her eternal life has already started.

55. God made you who you are by His divine plan and with the fullness of His divine power. God made no mistakes when He created certain limitations and weaknesses in you. God made no mistakes when He gave you talents, aptitudes, abilities and gifts. Never lament how God designed you, and always seek to invest and use for God's purposes and glory those special strengths, qualities, gifts and talents which God gave to you and constructed in you to make you special and unique.
56. All of the hustle and striving and pressure and worry of men (and some women) urgently seeking to climb the ladder and to achieve some type of recognition from others is quite silly. Every Christian is given the incredibly high office of being an ambassador of Jesus Christ. Imagine that - to represent the creator of the universe, the King of kings and the Lord of lords! By contrast being President of the United States or the CEO of the largest corporation is such a puny, insignificant office. Be a faithful and fruitful ambassador for our precious Savior.  
(II Corinthians 5:17-20)

## APPENDIX F

### MY PRAYER NOTEBOOK OUTLINE

1. **INDEX.** Put page numbers on all pages. All items, and all people and ministries are listed alphabetically in the index by name, with prayer notebook page numbers.
2. **GOALS FOR THE YEAR.** Personal, family, ministry, work.
3. **WORSHIP.** Attributes and characteristics of God grouped numerically 1 through 31 (see page 187).
4. **PRAYER ANSWERS AND JOURNALING.** Each day I write the date, day of the week. Then I write out the attributes of God from the adoration/worship list for that day. I review before the Lord what transpired the previous day. I note significant answers to prayer and significant blessings of the previous date (even if they had not been prayer for). I write out major prayer needs and requests for that day. I write out things that I am especially thankful to God for that have come to my attention within the last day. I journal Biblical truths that I discovered, applied, or was reminded of.
5. **CONFESSION.** Active confession for matters in my life at that time. I have a list of potential areas of sin numbered 1 through 31 for review before the Lord on "How am I doing" in avoiding such sins?
6. **"THIS VERY DAY."** Here I focus on preparation for the day (no unconfessed sin... no provision for the flesh . . . choose a way to escape temptation . . . honor God with 100% of actions, statements, thoughts. . . filled and controlled by the Holy Spirit. . . taking opportunities for evangelism . . . a review of the day's schedule before the Lord . . . consideration of the people I will meet that day and how I can be God's ambassador and witness to them . . . asking for God's help and provision for the day, my accountability covenants and my committing of today to the Lord.
7. **GIVING.** I show our goals of giving for the year. My chart has different categories of giving (laid out in column format for each month) to our church and other Christian ministries. I have a place to enter the year-to-date total so that I know at any given time how much we have given to the Lord that year and how our giving compares to our giving goals.
8. **SALVATION.** I have a list of individuals for whom I am praying to be saved. I have a list of "Ways to Pray for the Salvation of Individuals" (see Appendix I). I have a separate page for the salvation of relatives and close friends who are unsaved and another page for clients, contacts and others who need Christ.
9. **MISSIONARIES/MISSIONS.** I group those for whom I pray daily, and behind those I have others I pray for weekly. Using the notebook format there is the potential of either one page or two pages per missionary family when the notebook is opened. A suggestion is to include the names of the missionaries and each member of the family, a picture of the

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missionaries, name and address of the mission, address, telephone, email and fax of the missionary, and current prayer requests for their family, ministry, people who are being ministered to by them, and other prayer requests. Use post-it notes for additional or temporary prayer matters. Be sure to transfer current information from missionary letters into your prayer notebook.

10. **MY FAMILY.** I have pages that display pictures of my family and their names and a place for indicating special prayer needs of each member of the family, and for my family as a unit. I also have a place for other more distant relatives.
11. **CHURCHES.** Our local church, our pastors, church leaders and teachers and their families. I also list some other churches and pastors I pray for.
12. **MY MINISTRIES** (by God's grace). I list (and pray about) the ministries God has given me, including being a pray-er, evangelism and about a dozen others.
13. **MY WORK.** I list my law office in Indiana, my law office in Florida, my work as CEO of a manufacturing company, my staff, and specific prayer matters and people/clients/customers.
14. **SPECIAL/OTHER.** I list other matters for daily prayer which do not specifically fit into the previous sections.
15. **WEEKLY PRAYER MATTERS.** Missionaries, individuals, ministries, and other prayer matters for which I pray WEEKLY . . . separated into divisions for Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, and in each daily section I include prayer pages for missionaries, churches, ministries, and the other items for prayer.

\* \* \* \* \*

In addition to my thick prayer notebook I also have the same items on a typed prayer list which I can use when traveling or outside walking while I pray. My entire prayer notebook (color pictures and all) I scanned and then downloaded to my pocket PC. In this age of electronics, I am able to regularly and easily update my prayer tools. Please remember, that being organized **for** prayer is not the same as actually praying. You don't engage in meaningless repetition. You don't pray to a notebook or to a list. These are merely effective tools. You pray to the Living God.

## APPENDIX G

### CHARACTERISTICS OF GOD

**PRAISE - OUR GOD IS :** (1) **I AM**, Sovereign yet mysteriously gives us free choices, God rules over all things, Accomplishes all things that God wills, The King of kings , The Lord of lords....(2) Almighty and Omnipotent, Our Rock, Our Fortress, The Beginning through the End....(3) Omniscient, In Total Control (over kings and earthly leaders, human events, good angels, and Satan and demons- *all are under His control* (and even human decisions when God selectively chooses to invade a person's will), God is above all things....(4) Omnipresent, God is WATCHING and He truly cares about what He sees, The Prayer-Answerer, The Keeper of all Promises....(5) Our Heavenly Father, Our Eternal Dwelling Place and underneath are His Loving Arms, Just, Caring....(6) Our Creator, The Problem-fixer, The Owner of Time & Redeemer of Time, Our Master, the Great Physician, Our Redeemer....(7) Before all things, Eternal, Infinite, Awe-inspiring....(8) Immutable, Incomparable, The Author of life....(9) Jesus the Son of God, The Son of Man, Our Provider, The Bestower of true riches and true success, The Healer and The Helper....(10) Incomprehensible, Transcendent, Our Propitiation, Our Savior....(11) All-Good , Desirous to bless and benefit, Our Hope, The Chief Cornerstone, Heir of all things....(12) Merciful, Gracious, Jesus, our Joint-Heir, Our Mediator....(13) Loving, The Sustainer and The Upholder of all things, Our Keeper....(14) The Way, The Truth, The Life, The Conscience-Enhancer ....(15) The Righteous Judge, The Owner of 100% of Vengeance, The Avenger, The Messiah....(16) Hater of Sin, Our Advocate [Perfect Lawyer], The Lion of Judah....(17) Worthy, Faithful, On Our Side, Our Great Shepherd, Our Justifier, Our Sanctifier....(18) Patient, Longsuffering, The Lamb of God, The Bridegroom of the Church....(19) Our Counselor, Our Everlasting Father, Our Comforter, Our Light, Our Clothing of Righteousness, Our Heavenly Mansion-Builder....(20) Faithful and True, Forgiving, Our Deliverer, Our Peace-giver....(21) Trustworthy, Our Friend, The Head of the Church ....(22) Our Salvation, Our Redeemer, Our Intercessor, Our Great High Priest....(23) The Eternal Word made known, Our Brother (Jesus)....(24) Our Hiding Place, Our Refuge, Our Strength ....(25) Great, The Doer of Great Things, the bright Morning Star, The Servant, The True Light and The True Vine, Wonderful....(26) Understanding, Compassionate, The Prince of Peace, Preminent.... (27) Wise and The Giver of Wisdom ....(28) Vigilant, Our Protector, Our Shield.... (29) Our Teacher, Our Guide, The Light of the world, Living Bread, Our Passover....(30) Holy, Perfect, Beautiful....(31) Righteous, 100% Right, Our Sin-Bearer ... And **SOON-RETURNING !**

## APPENDIX H

### Axiomatic Truths

#### A SOLID ROCK ... A FIRM FOUNDATION ... UNCHANGING AND TRUE

1. **THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.** The Bible is absolutely true; It contains no mistakes and it has no contradictions or inconsistencies. God's truth is not changed or affected by popular opinion, or by the rejection or disbelief by man. The writings of the Old and New Testaments are the very Word of God, verbally inspired in all of its parts and without error as originally given by God, as our fully sufficient and only infallible rule of faith and conduct. The canon of Scripture was closed with the Book of Revelation and we possess today an extremely accurate and reliable text. II Timothy 3:16,17; II Peter 1:20,21; John 17:17; Revelation 22:18,19.
2. **GOD.** The Godhead exists in three persons – God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. These three have always existed and are one God, having the same nature, attributes and perfection. Romans 1:20; Matthew 28:19; Deuteronomy 4:35; John 17:5.
3. **JESUS CHRIST.** Jesus Christ is God. The Bible clearly establishes the deity of Jesus Christ; and Jesus Himself declared His deity. Jesus was begotten of the Holy Spirit and at the time of His condescension He was born of the Virgin Mary, truly God and truly man. John 1:1; John 1:14; Matthew 1:20; Luke 1:30, 31; Philippians 2:5-7; I Timothy 3:16; Colossians 1:19, John 5:17,22,23; 8:58; 10:25-30; 12:44-45; 14:7,9; 17:9-11; 20:28; Phil. 2:5-8; Heb. 1:8; 13:8; Rev. 1:8-17.
4. **THE HOLY SPIRIT.** The Holy Spirit is God. The Holy Spirit is the source and power for all acceptable worship and service, and is the infallible interpreter of the infallible Word of God. The Holy Spirit indwells every true believer the instant of salvation, and is ever present to testify of Christ, seeking to occupy us with Him rather than with ourselves or our experiences. The Holy Spirit is the dynamic and active Comforter, Helper, Guide and Teacher, and He convicts our conscience of our sins. Acts 9:31; John 14:16-26; 16:13; Romans 8:59,26; I John 4:1-6; John 15:26; 16:13,14; Acts 5:3,4; Acts 1:8; Romans 8:9, 26,27; I Corinthians 2:12, 14; 3:16; 12:13.
5. **THE NATURE OF MAN.** God created man (male and female) in the image and likeness of God, as recorded in the Bible; but the whole human race fell in “the Fall” of the first Adam (i.e. when Adam sinned, the consequences of sin fell upon Adam and upon the entire human race). Not only was man's moral nature grievously injured by the Fall, but all of mankind totally lost all spiritual life, becoming dead in trespasses and sins, and subject to the power of the Devil. “The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be. So then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God.” (Romans 8:7,8). God declares that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). Therefore, man cannot see or enter the kingdom of God unless he or she is born again by receiving Jesus Christ as Savior, at which time he or she becomes a “new creature,” with a new spiritual nature imparted by God from above, indwelled and taught by the Holy Spirit. No degree of reformation however great, no attainment in morality however high, no culture however attractive, no humanitarian and philanthropic schemes and societies however useful, no baptism or other ordinance however

administered, can make the sinner even one step closer to Heaven. Genesis 1:26,27; Romans 5:12; Ephesians 2:1-3; John 3:3, 6,7; Titus 3:5.

6. **CHRIST'S PROPITIATORY SACRIFICE**. God declares that the wages/penalty for sin is death (Romans 6:23). Man could not and cannot save himself from God's judgment for sin. Only Jesus Christ lived a perfect, sinless life, so that He did not need to sacrifice His blood for His own sins, and therefore He could shed His blood as the sacrifice for the sins of mankind. Jesus Christ became the sinner's substitute before God, and Jesus died as a propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. Jesus Christ was made a curse for the sinner, dying for the sinner's sins according to the Scriptures. No repentance, no feeling, no good resolutions, no sincere efforts, no submission to the rules and regulations of any church can add anything to the value of the precious blood sacrificially shed by Jesus Christ, or add to the merit of Christ's finished work wrought for us by Him, who tasted death for every man. Romans 5:8; I John 2:2; Hebrews 2:9; Galatians 3:13; Romans 3:22-26; 4:4,5; 6:23; Colossians 1:13,14,20,21.

7. **THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST**. Jesus Christ voluntarily allowed Himself to be arrested, mistreated, illegally tried, and then crucified upon the awful cross of Calvary. Jesus died and was buried according to the Scriptures. On the third day the crucified body of Jesus Christ was in fact resurrected. He Lives! Jesus was raised from the dead according to the Scriptures, and He ascended into Heaven where Jesus now sits at the right hand of God as the believer's high priest, intercessor and advocate. Luke 24:39; Acts 1:10,11; Romans 8:34; Ephesians 4:10; Hebrews 1:3; I John 2:1.

8. **THE ONLY MEANS OF SALVATION**. Jesus is the only way to be saved. John 14:6. The salvation Jesus Christ secured, by His death and resurrection, is received by God's grace through faith alone, and the moment a person genuinely trusts in Jesus Christ as Savior, he or she passes out of death into everlasting life, justified from all sins, accepted before the Father as a member of God's family forever, loved as Jesus Himself is loved and made one with Him. At the moment of acceptance of Christ as Savior, the Lord comes to dwell within the believer and to live out His life of holiness and power through the believer. Hebrews 9:15; John 5:24; Romans 3:28; Romans 4:3,23-25; Ephesians 1:3; John 17:23; Galatians 2:20; Galatians 4:6,7; Galatians 5:16; Acts 1:8. When a person truly believes in and receives the Lord Jesus as personal Savior that person is born from above ("born again") into the family of God, and will (without any exceptions) have eternal life (eternal security) and will (without any exceptions) be with Christ forever. John 3:16; John 6:37,44; John 10:27-29; Romans 8:35-39; Philippians 1:6; Hebrews 13:5, I John 2:19.

9. **THE CHURCH**. The true Church is composed of all those who truly believe on the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, i.e. all who have been "saved" and born again (i.e. "born from above"). The Church is the body and bride of Christ. Every believer, whether Jew or Gentile, is spiritually baptized into the body of Christ by the Holy spirit at the instant of salvation. Having thus become members of one another, believers are responsible to find their place in a local assembly of Bible-believing Christians for worship, instruction, edification, encouragement, and fellowship, and to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, rising above all sectarian prejudices and denominational bigotry and fervently loving one another with a pure heart.

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Hebrews 10:24,25; Ephesians 2:19-22; Ephesians 1:22,23; Ephesians 5:25-27,31,32; I Corinthians 12:13; Romans 12:4,5; Ephesians 4:1-3; I Corinthians 1:10; I Corinthians 13:4-8a.

10. **THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.** The life of a Christian is to be characterized by abundant joy and peace. John 15:11; II Corinthians 8:2; Philippians 4:4; I Peter 1:8; Galatians 5:22; Romans 5:1; Ephesians 2:14; Philippians 4:6-9. Christians are to do all to the glory of God. I Corinthians 10:31-32. They are to be increasingly conformed to the image of Jesus Christ, with the aim to please the Lord. Romans 8:29; II Corinthians 5:9. All believers in the Lord Jesus Christ are called into a life of separation from worldly and sinful practices, and should abstain from any activities, amusements and habits that would cause others to stumble, or bring reproach upon Jesus Christ. II Corinthians 6:17-7:1; I Thessalonians 4:7; Romans 14:19-21. Believers are created in Christ Jesus unto good works. “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.” Galatians 6:10; I John 2:15,16; Romans 14:13; Romans 13:14; I Corinthians 10:31; Ephesians 2:10.

11. **THE CHRISTIAN'S MISSION.** The supreme mission of every believer is to glorify God and Christians are to live for that purpose. I Chronicles 16:23-28; Psalm 22:23; 34:3; 69:30; 86:9, 12; 118:28; Isaiah 42:12; 60:21; 61:3; I Corinthians 6:20; Philippians 1:11; I Peter 4:11. Every believer is called to participate in the evangelization of the world. Part of glorifying God is to preach the Gospel to every person in the world, including the evangelization of children, youth and adults of all ages. Mark 16:15; II Corinthians 5:18,19; Matthew 18:14.

12. **CHRIST IS COMING AGAIN.** The next great event is the rapture at the close of this age, when Jesus Christ will come again, down from heaven, for His bride – the Church – and the dead in Christ will rise first, then all Christians alive at that time will all be caught up together to meet the Lord Jesus Christ in the air, and to thereafter be with Christ forever. The rapture is the “blessed hope” for which every believer is to be constantly watching as an any moment possibility. Philippians 3:20; John 14:1-3; I Thessalonians 1:10; I Thessalonians 4:16, 17; I Thessalonians 5:9; Daniel 9:24-27; II Thessalonians 2:6-8; Titus 2:13; Revelation 3:10. The imminent return of Jesus Christ should cause Christians to live a holy and God-honoring life so as to be found faithful when Christ appears. II Peter 3:11-14; I John 3:2-3; Hebrews 10:25.

13. **AT THE DEATH OF A CHRISTIAN.** The souls of the “saved” (those who have trusted in Jesus Christ for salvation i.e. truly born again Christians) at death immediately pass into God's presence, and there remain in conscious bliss (no “soul sleep”)until the resurrection of the body at Christ's coming, when soul and body re-united shall be with the Lord forever in glory. That is, Christians go to heaven the instant they die and are eternally blessed and are joyfully in the presence of the Lord eternally. Luke 23:43; II Corinthians 5:8; Luke 16:22,25; Philippians 1:23; I Thessalonians 4:15-18.

14. **AT THE DEATH OF A NON-CHRISTIAN.** The souls of the “lost” (those who did NOT trust in Jesus Christ for salvation i.e. they died without Christ) at death are immediately cast into hell and are in misery until (and after) the final judgment at the great white throne, when soul and body are reunited and shall be cast “into the lake of fire,” which is the “second death,” to be “punished with everlasting destruction” outside of the presence of the Lord. That is, non-

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Christians go to hell the instant they die and are eternally punished. II Thessalonians 1:8,9; Luke 16:22,23,27,28; Hebrews 9:27; Revelation 20:5,11-15; II Thessalonians 1:7-9.

15. **SATAN AND SPIRITUAL WARFARE ARE REAL.** Satan is a real being, referred to in the Bible as “that old serpent,” called “the Devil” and “Satan.” Satan is the deceiver of the whole world. Satan is a liar, and the father of lies. John 8:44; Revelation 12:9; Ephesians 6:11,12; I Peter 5:8; Revelation 20:10. Satan opposes the work of God. I Thessalonians 2:18. Christians are now engaged in spiritual warfare. Ephesians 6:12. Therefore Christians should take up the whole spiritual armor of God to be able to withstand evil. Ephesians 6:10-18. Christians can and should have peace and victory in the face of the Devil and evil forces because of God’s promises that when the believer resists the Devil, the Devil shall flee, James 4:7; and that greater is the Lord within the believer, than Satan and his legions who are in the world. I John 4:4.

16. **MORE GLORIOUS TRUTHS.** The Bible is truth and is 100% true. As God’s Word the Bible answers all of the “big questions” that exist. God’s revealed truths, as recorded in the Bible, allow one to know God, to know what is right, good and moral, to know what is wrong, bad and immoral, to know how one should live, to know how to be an excellent person, to know how to be an excellent spouse, parent, child, employer, employee, friend (and all other relationships), to understand why there is suffering and wrong in the world, to know for sure what happens when one dies, to know how to have full and abiding joy, to know how to have genuine peace in one’s life and heart, to know how to be content, to know how to love, and on and on and on.

If you sincerely desire TRUTH, then I encourage you to study the Bible for yourself. Because the Bible IS TRUE and because God is alive and dynamic you can legitimately expect that as you sincerely, and honestly study the Bible, God will prove to you that His Word is true, and that all that God declares about Himself and about you is true as well.

\* \* \* \* \*

We live in a time when many say that truth is “relative.” That is false. Others say, “You can have your truth and I will have my truth.” That is false. Still others declare, “You are intolerant and ignorant if you say that the Bible is the only valid Scripture, or if you say that Jesus Christ is the only way of salvation.” That is false. I’m so glad that God’s truth does not depend upon some public opinion poll, and that Christianity - as the only true religion - is not man-made or just the latest “flavor of the day” religion. The Bible is true. If you reject the Bible, you do so at your own eternal peril! If you accept the Bible as true, you can find genuine eternal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, and you can have a life with purpose, strength, fruitfulness, peace and joy.

- Paul D. Refior \*  
 (“Rafe”)  
[www.refior.com](http://www.refior.com)

\*Pronounced “Ray’-fee-or”

**APPENDIX I**

**Ways To Pray For the Salvation of Another [“Max”]  
(It is OK to pray, “Lord, please save Max,” but here are other ways to pray based upon  
Biblical examples and instructions)**

**PRAY:** [Note: YOU may be the witness in each of the prayer requests listed below.]

1. That the Holy Spirit will prepare the way for Max to hear the Gospel message and to make Max willing and open to listen to the Gospel and that the Holy Spirit will open Max's mind and heart to understand the Gospel.
2. That Max will be witnessed to by a Spirit-filled, Spirit-led and led Christian who will powerfully and effectively share Christ with Max.
3. That the witness will have boldness and courage while witnessing, and will have a God-given sensitivity to rightly witness to Max and that the witness will easily and correctly remember, use and apply Scripture during such witnessing.
4. That our Savior Jesus Christ and the way to be saved, will be clearly and effectively presented to Max.
5. That God will bind and keep back "the god of this age" (Satan) who blinds the minds of the unbelievers ... and that with God's restraint of Satan, Max will be able to "see the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." II Cor. 4:4.
6. That God will demolish the strongholds which block the way to Max receiving Christ, and that God will destroy the arguments that set up against the knowledge of God. II Cor. 10:4-5.
7. That the Word of God as it is shared by the witness will have free course and be effective in the heart of Max.
8. That God will give the witness the words "whenever they open their mouth . . . so that they will fearlessly make known the mystery of the Gospel . . . that they may declare it fearlessly, as they should." Eph. 6:19-20. And that "God may open up a door for their message, so that the witness may proclaim the mystery of Christ." Col. 4:3.
9. That the Word which is shared by the witness will spread widely and grow in power. Acts 19:20.
10. That God the Father will draw Max to Himself. John 6:44. And that Max will be "taught by God" ... and will "listen to the Father and learn from Him." John 6:45.
11. That Max will hear and read Scripture . . . that Max by being exposed to passages of Scripture will thereby be directly impacted by "the Word of God which is living and

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powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Heb. 4:12.

12. That Max will honestly "listen" to the Gospel being declared and that "the Lord will open Max's heart to respond" to the Gospel. Acts 16:14.
13. That Max will choose to believe . . . will choose to place his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation . . . will receive Jesus as his Savior . . . AND BE SAVED.

Romans 10:1, "Brothers, my heart's desire and PRAYER  
TO GOD is . . . that they may be SAVED."

[Note: Besides this one verse, all other references in the Bible to praying for salvation relate to praying for the WITNESS who is testifying and proclaiming the Gospel, or for the working of the Lord and His Word.]

## APPENDIX J

### A Rule of Life

There is NOTHING more  
important in ANY day than  
my Bible study and prayer . . . .  
nothing . . . . no matter what  
else is scheduled.  
If I have substantial quality and  
submitted time with the Lord  
in serious Bible Study and prayer,  
and then live for the Lord that day  
then the day is a success, no matter  
what else happens or does not happen that day;  
and  
NO DAY can be considered  
complete or a success unless  
I have spent such QUALITY  
quiet time with the Lord that day . . . .  
no matter what else has happened  
or has been accomplished  
that day.

---

When all is said and done, it is your **CHOICE** whether you will have a happy and God-honoring marriage. **CHOOSE WELL ! . . .** and then **DO IT !!!** Authenticate your **CHOICES** with your OBEDIENT words, deeds, thoughts and attitudes.

- Paul D. Refior \*  
("Rafe")  
[www.refior.com](http://www.refior.com)

\*Pronounced "Ray'-fee-or"

Paul (“Rafe”) and Pam Refior invite you to make the **CHOICES** that will please the Lord and will result in a happy and God-honoring marriage. The Refiors have enjoyed more than 35 years of blissful marriage, and they rejoice that their two precious daughters also have wonderful, God-honoring and happy marriages.

A beautiful marriage is the closest thing to Heaven here on earth. By embracing the straightforward principles in this book, you too can have the quality marriage that is available to Christians who love their God, and who obediently apply the principles of the Bible to their **CHOICES**, to their life and to their marriage.