

CHRISTIAN HOME IN AN UNCHRISTIAN WORLD

by

John Lawrence

No Copyright

edited for 3BSB by Baptist Bible Believer in the spirit of the Colportage Ministry of a century ago

~ out-of-print and in the public domain ~

CHAPTER 3

"Heirs Together of the Grace of Life."

"I, John, take thee, Mary, to be my wedded wife; and I do promise and covenant, before GOD and these witnesses, to be thy loving and faithful husband; in plenty and in want; in joy and in sorrow; in sickness and in health; so long as we both shall live."

The same is repeated for the wife. And with this ceremony a man and a woman commence a life together which is not to end until one is taken in death.

They will face many problems from the very fact that they are in a hostile world, but GOD's design is that these problems are blessings in disguise, for He has designed that the difficulties these two partners face be the means of uniting them in a blessed "togetherness."

But there are also other problems that will arise which do not come upon the couple from the outside, but which ascend from within the union itself.

Many of our stories conclude with the expression, "and they lived happily ever after," and many young people have thought that all their problems at home with their parents would be solved when they got married and had their own homes. They would not make the same mistakes their fathers and mothers had. How dumb their parents have been.

Having all the answers, they leap into marriage totally unprepared for this new life, and completely out of touch with reality. The marriage is going to be different, they say. But soon their aerial balloon has burst into a thousand shreds and their heart is aching as if it would break.

Next to salvation, marriage is the most important step an individual makes, but how can we expect anyone to make this step in accordance with GOD's Word and with mature judgment who has not been taught and prepared for it?

Love is blind, and marriage is an institution. That makes marriage an institution for the blind. All too often this is the bitter fact of reality. A person in love cannot see anything because emotion has blinded his eyes temporarily from reality. The time for them to set goals and standards is

before the engagement ring is placed on the third finger, left hand.

Marriage is, for the believer, to be a union in three areas: spirit, soul and body. There can be no true harmony in marriage apart from two hearts pulsating as one in all three areas.

I. Woe is the Couple that is not Spiritually Mated

One cannot be pulling in one direction in spiritual things, and the other one in another direction, and there be any true happiness in any area.

This is why the believer is never to marry an unbeliever: "**Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbeliever**"

The word unequally yoked transliterated is *heterox-yoke*. The yoke is the same for the two yoked, but the two that are yoked are not the same. It would be like yoking a mule with a pigeon, or a giraffe with a bunny rabbit.

Paul goes on in II Corinthians 6 to spell out five contrasts that exist between the believer and the unbeliever.

In the book of I Corinthians 7:39, he says: "**The wife is bound by the law**" i.e., the law of marriage, "**as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord.**" The believer is at liberty to marry anyone who is a believer, but the believer is not at liberty to marry an unbeliever. And if they do, they will bear the penalty for disobedience to the revealed Word of GOD.

I have never personally known of a case where a believer deliberately married an unbeliever and the unbeliever was later saved. I do not say it is impossible, but it is very unlikely. Many have said: "I will marry them and then lead them to the Lord." This is not true. You will lead them to the Lord before you marry them, or you will never lead them to the Lord. Someone else may lead them to the Lord, but after marriage, you will not.

Even if both the man and the woman are believers, but they do not agree together before marriage on where they will go to church and how they will serve the Lord, there will not be the unity in spirit, which in turn will affect the entire harmony of the marriage.

GOD has the right girl or the right boy for you. Wait for them. You will be forever glad that you did.

Marriage is not for Heaven, for in Heaven we neither marry nor are given in marriage (Matthew 22:30), but marriages are made in Heaven.

Blessed is the couple whom GOD meant for each other, who are one in spirit as well as soul and body, and who serve the Lord together without hindrance one to the other.

II. Woe is the Couple that is not Mated in Soul

Theirs is an existence of living torment.

A. God's Original Design

Let us go back to Genesis and notice GOD's design for marriage. Throughout the entire first chapter we have repeated "**and God saw that it was good**" or "very good" as is recorded at the end of the sixth day. However, when we come to Genesis 2:18 we find a contrast: "**And the Lord God said, It is not good . . .**" By the end of that day He will pronounce it very good, but in the midst of the day and in the midst of creation He pronounces it "not good." It is not good in reference to one thing -- "**that the man should be alone.**"

It is not a case that there were no other animals, but that there was none that responded to Adam as his equal and recipient of his love.

It is still good that man should not dwell alone. Therefore, we read in Proverbs 18:22, "**Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the Lord.**" Marriage is GOD's norm for all men. Every young person should expect it unless GOD directs otherwise.

"I will make him an help meet for him."

We need to look closely at this statement. First observe that "help" and "meet" do not go together. It is not a "help-meet" that GOD is going to make him, but "a help -- meet for him." These are two different words.

The first word is "an helper, a succourer." The verb from which this word is derived gives the idea of girding, surrounding, and hence defending. This exact word is used 19 times in the Old Testament, and usually signifies the help given by GOD Himself to man. For instance, Psalm 121:1, "**from whence cometh my help?**" "**My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth.**"

The second word, "meet for him," is literally "according to what is in front of him," i.e., someone corresponding to him; someone equal and adequate to himself of which there was nothing among the animals. Here is someone who would "respond to his face" -- and this is what is meant. The woman was made to be someone who can go to the aid of the man in distress. Someone who will respond to his feelings, and be one with him in soul; one he can count on to be by his side; one with whom he may share the totality of his life. Just as the Lord JESUS will have a bride to be with Him and to share the blessings of eternity, so the man selects a bride that she might share with him life together and the two be "**heirs together of the grace of life.**"

Here the Lord gave man "a helper as his counterpart." She was not created to be his slave, nor was she created inferior. She was created to be his companion -- another self -- whom the man could love and cherish as his own body: "**So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself**" (Ephesians 5:28).

Matthew Henry said long ago: "she was not made out of his head to surpass him, nor from his feet to be trampled on, but from his side to be equal to him, and near his heart to be dear to him."

The Lord made the woman for the man: "**Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man**" (I Corinthians 11:9), but He made both for Himself: "**For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him**" (Colossians 1:16).

GOD has created within the very makeup of man and woman the need to love and be loved. You can take a young child and provide everything necessary in way of cleanliness, nutrition, rest and activity, but if you deprive that child of love his whole system will become sick.

There is an ingredient used in hospitals that is not available in the drug store nor can it be bought at all, yet it is the wonder of wonder drugs and has done more in healing than all the rest of medicine. It is termed TLC and means "tender loving care."

We are social creatures who need to love and to know that we are loved. When a woman feels she is just a maid in the home -- someone to do the laundry, to cook the meals, to clean the house and raise the kids -- there are serious problems in the home because there is a serious problem in the heart of the wife. The man is responsible for this being there, too. She is responding to his face; she is doing the one thing GOD created her to do. She can do no different.

The woman has a basic need to know she is Queen, not for just a day, but Queen in your heart every day. In order for her to know this, she must be treated as a Queen should be and that her husband would never say anything derogatory about her even before the children, let alone to some outsider.

She needs to know that her husband loves her to such an extent that he will let no one speak against her without contending with him, and that if need be he would even die to protect her. This is more valuable to a wife than rubies and diamonds.

When a man feels that his wife will do anything and everything for others and for the kids, but has no time for him and will do nothing for him, again there is trouble.

He needs to know that he is King in the home and is treated like a King. His reign is not to be as a tyrant, but to be in love. GOD has created both the man and the woman with certain basic emotional needs.

The wife's basic need is for affection and companionship from her husband. She must know that there is one person who does care and shows that he cares about her. If this is lacking, no amount of things can take its place.

I have seen men who work extra hours at the office or plant in order to provide extra things for his wife and family which was his way of showing his wife that he loved her. But she was at home with a bleeding heart because the one thing she wanted and needed, a husband and a father for her children, she does not have.

A woman needs security, but she needs more than just money to buy groceries and a house to live in. This is cold and empty.

The husband's basic need is for recognition and sense of achievement from his wife. Even if no one else thinks he is anything or amounts to anything, he needs to know that he has one who will always consider him the greatest.

If he fails at home, the man will feel he is a failure regardless of his success in business or any other area. He might be the head of the plant, but if he is not King at home, he is nothing in his own eyes.

B. Adjustments among Couples

Man and woman as they were originally created were perfect, and there were no problems. We just cannot possibly comprehend this state and situation, but this is the way it was. They were both perfect in every way. There were no maladjustments, in fact, there were no adjustments at all. No heartaches were experienced because of cutting words or bitter actions. Just think what marriage would be like with two perfect people.

1. Maladjustments

But we are not perfect people, and because we are not there is conflict in marriage, and there are adjustments that we must make. Whenever there is a couple that has a problem, the cause is with both parties. Everyone, without exception who is having matrimonial problems needs help.

We can always see the other person's problem, but we can never see our own. If you are having problems with your mate, you will be blinded to the problem in yourself. You will think the cause is all in your wife or husband. They are just unreasonable; they are just unbearable.

The problem is not all in them at all. A family fight is like a church fight -- neither side is completely right. You can't throw mud without having your own hands dirty.

Oh, how often I have seen a person come to think in his mind: "All the problem is with my mate. If I just got rid of them and married someone else, everything would be all right, and I would be happy again."

But this is just not true. A person that is not able to make a go of one marriage will not be able to make a go of another (regardless of who he or she marries) because the basic cause of the problem is within themselves, and the problem moves with them when they move.

Contrariwise, it is a fact that the persons that are happily married could have been nearly as happily married with someone else simply because they are mature as individuals, and well-adjusted as persons.

Every couple has conflicts in marriage. No marriage on earth is without them. The problem is not the conflict, but what you do when the conflict occurs.

One man was asked: "What do you do when a problem comes up between you and your wife?" "Oh, we both give a little," was the reply. "She gives me her advice and decision, and I finally

give in." Now this is no solution at all.

Here is a woman that begins to cry, and everything the husband tries to discuss the problem she bursts into tears. Finally the husband gives in. While it may look like she has gained, in reality she has lost far more than could ever be told for the problem is not solved.

Some women become moody; others scheme and connive behind the scenes to work everything out their way which is more dangerous to a husband than handling nitroglycerin in a bottle.

Then there are the ways the husband has of settling something by force and temper. This hasn't settled anything; it has only increased the problem. There are men that will talk and talk and talk and talk and bring out every skeleton in the closet each time he goes into his tirade.

Then there is the man who will not talk at all, but will go for weeks and not even speak to his wife. Oftentimes they even forget what the original problem was because so many other things have come up in the mean time.

When one member of the marriage is a Christian and another member is not, often the non-Christian resorts to drink in order to escape their matrimonial problem. When a person drinks, there is a basic reason why they drink and the mate should realize this.

All of these ways are totally inadequate and none solve anything. They only increase and compound the problem.

2. Healthy adjustments

You may think that a happy marriage doesn't have any problems. This is totally wrong. The successful marriage has learned how to deal with the problems that arise. Any successful marriage has learned the secret of bringing out any problem into the open and discussing it without emotion with their mate and arriving at a satisfactory solution to both persons involved.

This can all be said in a sentence, but I have seen families take years to perfect it, and the sad thing, many families, even whose members are Christians, never have matured enough so as to be able to do this.

The key to any successful, happy marriage is communication. No couple can possibly mature and grow in love one for another without being able to communicate at all times on any subject to their mate.

This is one of the blessings of marriage. GOD has given to us someone with whom no secrets are withheld. Here is someone with whom we can be completely ourselves and be at ease -- not on guard where we have to weigh our words lest we say the wrong thing or be misunderstood. Because of love, we would not say anything deliberately to hurt or offend and they know it.

When communication breaks down, everything breaks down. Once we become emotionally involved, we cannot communicate anything to the one we love the most. Often times this state goes from bad to worse and we find ourselves caught in a maelstrom without any way out.

It is then that a third party is a must in order to communicate to both parties, without emotion, the needs of the other. Few people realize the enormous amount of time that a Pastor spends in this area.

The good marriages today are those marriages in which the parties always keep short account of things that come in between themselves. If the injunction "**let not the sun go down upon your wrath**" (Ephesians 4:26) is good in our relationships between fellow believers, how much more is it excellent advice to every believing couple.

Learn in a mature way to discuss all problems and problem areas, and arrive at a healthy and satisfactory solution to both you and your mate.

It is not the discussion that is as important as the solution. The discussion is only a means to the end. If the discussion becomes an argument, the problem in place of being settled is increased.

It is not that there will not be problems and difficulties -- there most certainly will. But it is what is done with the problem that shows the maturity of the marriage, and the maturity of the marriage shows the maturity of the individuals in the marriage union.

"A happy marriage consists not only in finding the right mate, but in being the right mate." How mature you are as an individual will reflect in the maturity of your marriage.

C. Peter's Instruction for Wives and Husbands.

Here is divine guidance for adjustments in marriage and some of the problems one will face.

1. For the Wife, 1 Peter 3:1-6 (The Amplified New Testament is not inspired, rather it is a commentary using generally similar terms to project a vivid picture in one's mind of the subject under consideration)

"In like manner you married women, be submissive to your own husbands -- subordinate yourselves as being secondary to and dependent on them, and adapt yourselves to them. **So that even if any do not obey the Word** [of God], they may be won over not by discussion but by the [godly] lives of their wives, When they observe the pure and modest way in which you conduct yourselves, together with your reverence [for your husband]. That is, you are to feel for him all that reverence includes] -- to respect, defer to, revere him; [revere means] to honor, esteem (appreciate, prize), and [in the human sense] adore him; [and adore means] to admire, praise, be devoted to, deeply love and enjoy [your husband]. Let not yours be the [merely] external adorning with [elaborate] interweaving and knotting of the hair, the wearing of jewelry, or changes of clothes; But let it be the inward adorning and beauty of the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible and unfading charm of a gentle and peaceful spirit, which (is not anxious or wrought up, but) is very precious in the sight of God. For it was thus that the pious women of old who hoped in God were (accustomed) to beautify themselves, and were submissive to their husbands -- adapting themselves to them as themselves secondary and dependent upon them. It was thus that Sarah obeyed Abraham (following his guidance and acknowledging his headship over her by) calling him lord -- master, leader, authority. And you

are now her true daughters if you do right and let nothing terrify you -- not giving way to hysterical fears or letting anxieties unnerve you."

The woman will normally lean on the man. The saved wife may be tempted to lean on someone other than her unsaved husband. this is not to be.

He has the basic need of being looked up to and esteemed by his wife, even if no one else does. Don't destroy that basic need or you have destroyed the means of winning him to the Lord.

Peter in this passage is not for one moment minimizing neatness in the wife. He is speaking concerning extravagance and excess. The inward in a woman is far more important than the outward.

There is only to be one thing that you may be excessive in and it will be perfectly all right -- love for your husband: "The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine. teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children" (Titus 2:3-4).

"A meek and quiet disposition"

Meekness is different from "humility." Meekness is not striking back when struck -- the thought is with words. This striking back with little words and bemeaning one another is extremely dangerous. It is a sign that the marriage is very unhappy for both partners.

Consider how many proverbs of Solomon deal with this very important subject. Many a man doesn't stay at home with his wife simply because of her disposition.

"Afraid with any amazement."

The word "amazement" has in it the idea of "terror." One of the basic problems in women is "ear." As long as the believing wives are doing good, they need not be afraid with any sudden terror on account of the actions of their unbelieving husbands.

2. For the Husband, I Peter 3:7

"In the same way you married men should live considerately with [your wives], with an intelligent recognition [of the marriage relation], honoring the woman as [physically] the weaker, but [realizing that you] are joint heirs of the grace (God's unmerited favor) of life, in order that your prayers may not be hindered and cut off. -- otherwise you cannot pray effectively."

Husbands are to have knowledge, and yet when it comes to this basic area of knowing and meeting the needs of the wife, nearly everyone of them couldn't pass the simplest test. Peter says that you are to give honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel physically. Peter was a married man, and he had learned by the experience of married life.

Men, a woman needs tokens of expression that you, as her husband, are concerned and interested in her; that you are considerate and understanding of how she feels after working at home all day long and having the responsibility for the kids, and then you come home and take a snooze while

she continues to work.

A woman wants to know you are concerned. If you are not, who is?

Stop thinking just of yourself.

Change your habits.

do some things that you would not ordinarily do, just to please her, and you will be rewarded ten-fold.

I know some men who never lift a hand to help in the home. The wife can be ready to drop from exhaustion and she has prepared him a nice dinner along with many other little things, but no one cares about her -- not even the one she cares about the most.

then to add insult to injury, that hero of hers shows consideration for everyone else, but none for her.

He will carry something for some other woman, but do you think he would carry in the groceries for his wife? He wouldn't even think about this -- this is just his wife.

You and your wife are joint "**heirs together of the grace of life.**"

Your wife is your complement or counterpart. She answers back to you. She reflects all that you are. The more in love you treat her, the more in love she responds back to you. Since the man is the head, he makes all the deposit. Whatever the husband deposits, she reflects. She is the mirror of his soul.

It has been said that a well-adjusted, happily married couple gets so they think alike, act alike and even look alike. This is a fact, and it is not by accident; it is by divine design.

For a marriage to grow -- time must be spent on it.

It is like our growth in the Lord.
Only time spent in fellowship counts.
All other time we are growing apart.

In closing, let me read what Peter says.

Having spoken to wives, and to husbands, he states a closing word. We usually apply this to our social life and encounters with others. I do not want us to do that. As I read this I want each of us who is married to consider its application between us and our marriage partner alone.

1 Peter 3:8-12, "Finally, all [of you] should be of one and the same mind (united in spirit), sympathizing [with one another], loving [each the others] at brethren (of one household), compassionate and courteous -- tender-hearted and humble-minded. Never return evil for evil or insult for insult -- scolding, tongue-lashing, berating; but on the contrary blessing -- praying for

their welfare, happiness and protection, and truly pitying and loving them. For know that to this you have been called, that you may yourselves inherit a blessing [from God] -- obtain a blessing as heirs, bringing welfare and happiness and protection. For let him who wants to enjoy life and see good days (good whether apparent or not), keep his tongue free from evil, and his lips from guile (treachery, deceit). Let him turn away from wickedness and shun it; and let him do right. Let him search for peace -- harmony, undisturbedness from fears, agitating passions and moral conflicts -- and seek it eagerly. -- Do not merely desire peaceful relations [with God, with your fellowmen, and with yourself]," and we might add with your wife or with your husband, "but pursue, go after them! For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous -- those who are upright and in right standing with God -- and His ears are attentive to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who practise evil -- to oppose them, to frustrate and defeat them."

Oh, how often we treat someone else with tenderness, but return evil for evil, and insult for insult to the one we love the dearest!

GOD is not going to bless us, nor is He going to hear and answer our prayers.

To be right before the Lord, you must be right with one another.

If there is anything between you and the Lord, settle it today.

If there is anything between you and your mate, settle it today.

~ end of chapter 3 ~
