

Resolving  
c o n f l i c t  
MARRIAGE



Resolving  
c o n f l i c t  
IN  
MARRIAGE

Darrell L. Hines

  
WHITAKER  
HOUSE

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## RESOLVING CONFLICT IN MARRIAGE

Christian Faith Fellowship Ministries  
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www.christianfaithfellowship.org  
www.darrellhinesministries.com

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# Dedication



After twenty-two years of marriage, my wife, Pamela, is without question the love of my life.

Because of the life-changing Word of God, we are together today and have overcome much opposition within our marriage. We have victoriously walked hand in hand through some of life's toughest blows; and although the enemy endeavored to separate us, God's love continued to draw us closer.

I dedicate this book to Pamela because she has proven to me over and over again that her love for me is undying. Life without her is unimaginable; her sweet and tender disposition is something that I will never want to live without.

I love you, Pamela Megan Hines.

Your husband,  
Darrell Lynn Hines



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## Introduction

# Marriage in Crisis



**M**arriages are under attack today. The vast majority of Americans seem to agree this is the case. People today don't have the same approach toward marriage that people had forty or fifty years ago. A half century ago, divorce wasn't an "option" in the church. People stayed married no matter how bad things got in the relationship.

Today, people seem to have a "take a number" mind-set: "next"... "next"... "next." Some people go through spouses like they go through old pairs of shoes.

A half century ago, nobody had heard about prenuptial agreements. Nowadays, many people are making such agreements, and most say as they do, "This is just in case the marriage doesn't work out." There's an anticipation—even if it is largely unconscious—that the marriage will fail. The commitment going into the marriage is shaky.

Certainly there's good reason for these feelings. Nearly half of all marriages do end in divorce. Many live with severe conflict in their marriages. And very few people know what to do.

This book takes an approach that goes against the trends of the time:

- Marriage is God's idea, and therefore marriage must be held in high esteem.
- Conflict in marriage *can* be resolved.

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- People can live in satisfying, fulfilling, long-standing marriages.

### Conflicts *Can* Be Resolved

We each want to individualize our marital problems. We want to say, “Nobody has pain like I have pain. Nobody else has a problem as severe as my problem. Nobody else has a spouse who is quite as bad as my spouse.”

Stop your excuses. Get honest with yourself and with God’s Word.

God deals with us as individuals, but before He individualizes timing and specific methodology for our situation, He insists that we conform to His principles—and they do not change. God’s principles for marriage are absolute and universal. They apply to everybody—to all marriages in all cultures at all times, regardless of individual situations, circumstances, or personalities.

**God’s principles  
for marriage are  
absolute and  
universal.**

People come to the day of their wedding in many different ways. Some of those ways are cultural; some are personal.

In some cultures, people marry because they fall in love with each other and choose to marry.

In some cultures, people marry because their parents arranged the marriage. The arrangement may be rooted in social reasons, financial reasons, or religious reasons, or it simply might be a matter of “availability” or “intuition” on the part of the parents that the match is a good one.

In some cultures, a mixture of these two approaches is the custom—a couple may fall in love but not marry until (or unless) the parents give full agreement.

At times, of course, some couples marry because they have a baby prior to their wedding.

Regardless of the reasons or the path that brings two people together to a wedding day, the principles are the same for a couple

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to stay together in a marriage relationship that is mutually beneficial and satisfying.

God prepared the success of your marriage long before you ever got married. He set out the plan that would allow you to be happily, joyfully, and successfully married. Your part is to walk out God's plan. It's as you walk out *His* plan and not your own plan that your marriage takes on a deeper meaning and a deeper joy. It's then that marriage becomes truly satisfying and fulfilling.

**God prepared  
the success of  
your marriage  
long before you  
got married.**

What is God's plan and purpose for your marriage? We turn there first....



# God's Divine Plan for Your Marriage



*God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it  
was very good.*

—Genesis 1:31

**M**arriages in our nation are failing at a rate of one out of two. One of the main reasons for our high divorce rate, in my opinion, is that married people do not know the reason for their marriage. They have never gone to God's Word and asked the question, "How does God see my marriage?"

Most people marry for selfish reasons. They want to be married because they believe marriage will satisfy some need in their lives. They want the security of marriage, the sexual pleasure of marriage, the companionship of marriage, the children who are born to marriage, and the happiness they believe to be associated with marriage. Again, we need to ask, "What is *God's* purpose for a man and a woman to be married?"

For the answer, we need to go to the book of Genesis. That's the book of beginning, the book of "seed," the book that gives us God's ideal. What the first Adam lost through his rebellion and sin, the Second Adam, Jesus Christ, regained for those who believe in Him and follow Him. We need to discover what was lost and what we can regain through faith in Jesus Christ.

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### God's Plan for God's Creation

From the very beginning of creation, marriage was not man's idea. It was God's idea. In the first chapter of Genesis we read this:

*Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and the subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."*

(Genesis 1:26–28)

These verses introduce to us the cornerstone of mankind's nature: the image of God. For anything to be successful and fruitful on this earth, it must be in the image of God.

In these verses, God—as a singular God—says, "*Let Us make man in Our image*"—plural. At this all-important beginning point, God displays the "community" aspect of our nature and God's nature. God exists as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit. God exists as one entity with three functional representations. God is three, yet "one." God makes mankind "*male and female*"—two functional identities bound together as one. God created within the entity of "one" mankind a two-part being who is to live in harmony. God, as the Divine Family, created the human family in His image—separate functional representations of one entity.

In the institution of marriage, therefore, we see the reflection of God's image. Two become one.

One of the reasons the devil is so intent upon destroying marriages is that every time he sees a marriage in which two people truly have become one entity, the devil sees a reflection of God's nature. He sees unity, harmony, and oneness—a completely whole image of love and purpose.

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We rarely approach marriage thinking that it is a reflection of God's image. A woman thinks, *I'm going to get myself a man to support me.* A man thinks, *I'm going to get myself a woman to cook and clean for me.* We never think, *We together will reflect God's image. That's the ultimate purpose for our marriage.* The result of our failure to think this way about our marriage is a casualness toward marriage, a disregard for the deep spiritual purpose for marriage, and oftentimes a quick justification for dissolving "*what God has joined together*" (Matthew 19:6).

Everywhere I look, I see patterns of marriage that are reflections of just about anything *but* God's nature.

Ask yourself today: "Does my marriage reflect God's nature? Or does it reflect the devil's nature?"

Let me assure you of this: The things in your marriage that are not like God will be the things that bother you the most. And those things that are like God—in you as a person, in your spouse as a person, in your relationship as a married couple—will be things that are blessings and that cause you to be a blessing to others. You won't have any problem with those things that are like God. The character traits, the behaviors, and the disharmony in relationship that are not like God will be what gnaws at you deep within your heart. Those will be the things that frustrate you, trouble your mind, and cause you to feel anger and anxiety.

The devil will always try to exaggerate that part of you that is not like God. He will seek to exaggerate any aspect of your marriage that is not like God because the devil knows that if he can turn your mind toward the ways you are not like God and can amplify those behaviors and traits, he will have started the process of *division*. He will have driven a wedge to divide you from God and to divide you from your spouse.

### A Reflection of God's Nature

God created man to be like Himself. Being "in His image" means that man is to reflect God's nature. Certainly God is a spirit and we are flesh, but in our spirits and souls, we are created to be a reflection of God's spirit and soul. Mankind—which includes

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male and female—was created to think as God thought, speak as God spoke, act as God acted, feel as God felt, be motivated as God was motivated, and create as God created. The impulses of mankind’s inner self—the dreams, desires, hopes, and love of men and women—were initially designed to reflect the way God dreams, what God desires and hopes, and the way God loves.

That is an awesome truth you need to ponder for a while in your heart. Let it fill your being. You as a human being were initially created in God’s plan and purpose to reflect the nature of a holy God.

### *The Nature of God in "Relationship"*

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit dwell in perfect harmony. Their relationship is perfect; they are united, totally in sync with one another to the point that they cannot be identified as separate in nature. They are separate only in *function*.

How does this relate to your marriage? God created you and your spouse to be joined together in a way that is totally united, in sync, and undifferentiated when it comes to your “nature” as married people. You and your spouse have separate *functions* in the marriage. You are of different sexes. You have different personalities and gifts and talents. But you are to be of one “nature” when it comes to your character, your commitment, and your Christlikeness. You are to be holy as God is holy. You are to reflect His nature of perfect communion with each other; you are to establish a perfect relationship marked by a perfect love, a perfect trust, a perfect communication.

Now this is God’s ideal. None of us ever lives up to God’s perfection or God’s ideal, but this is what we are to seek to establish. It’s how we are to seek to live. It’s the goal at which we are to aim our lives and our marriages. This ideal about marriage is what God planned, what He desires, and what He is committed to helping you create.

### *A Sacred Bond*

Throughout the Creation story in the Bible, we find one statement made repeatedly: “*And God saw that it was good.*” But then

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we come to a verse in the second chapter of Genesis in which God says, *"It is not good"* (v. 18).

God looked and saw Adam tending the Garden of Eden and naming all the animals. Yet there was no helper or mate for Adam. There was nobody who was *"a helper comparable to him."* God said, *"It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him"* (v. 18).

So God caused a deep sleep to come on Adam, and He took one of his ribs and used it to form a woman. He closed up the wound in Adam's side, and after He had formed woman, He brought her to Adam, who said, *"This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man"* (v. 23).

Then God said, in response to this new creature of His making and the new relationship that was to exist between man and woman, *"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh"* (v. 24).

God designed Adam and Eve to be together as one flesh. They were to be joined—not only for a brief period to make children, as was true for the other creatures of the Garden, but also in a lasting relationship. They were to become and remain *"one flesh."*

The word *holy* means to be "separate." God is holy; He is not like man. He is separate, above, infinite, and unfathomable in His power and wisdom and glory. He is too great and magnificent for our full comprehension. He is of a different order than mankind.

In the same way, mankind was to be "separate"—not like the animals but like God. We are to function on a higher level than biology. We are to live in the spirit as well as in the flesh. The bond of marriage is not for sex and procreation alone; it is a bond that is "holy," a bond that is separate from other physical creatures, a bond that has a sacred mark of approval upon it.

**We are to  
function on a  
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Not only were Adam and Eve made in the likeness of God—designed for community and the togetherness of a family—but they also were made with the enduring likeness of God who enters into relationship with mankind and never leaves that relationship. As we become one in spirit with the Lord through salvation, so man becomes one in flesh with a spouse through marriage.

### Family Is Rooted in the Name of Jesus

The apostle Paul wrote to the Ephesians,

*For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height; to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.* (Ephesians 3:14–19)

*Family* is a word that is rooted in a name. We tend to think of family in terms of our surname—for example, Smith, Brown, or Hines. The Bible, however, tells us that family ultimately is rooted in the name of Jesus Christ. He is the One who defines family.

God is our Father.

God is Husband to His people.

God is like a nurturing mother.

Jesus is the Bridegroom.

The church is the bride.

The Bible is filled with images and references related to family. The family is God's idea, God's purpose and plan, the expression of His image!

What God defines, God supports. God provides for what He defines. God is the One who imparts to “family” all that “family”

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needs in order to survive: faith to believe in the love of God that is beyond measure.

God loves you...and He loves your marriage.

God blesses those whom He loves. He has spiritual and natural riches beyond measure for you...and for your marriage.

God has a purpose for those whom He loves. He has a purpose for you...and for your marriage.

What you need is the faith to believe in the love of God for yourself and your marriage! It is the challenge of your faith to believe for the “*width and length and depth and height*” of all that Jesus Christ desires to impart to you.

What keeps us from grabbing hold of that faith in God's love and purpose for us? For some, thought patterns need to be renewed. In some, stubborn wills need to be yielded. In some, hearts need to be restored.

### The Defining Characteristic of the Relationship: Mutual Love

What marks the relationship among the Godhead? Mutual love. Jesus said, *“For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does; and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel”* (John 5:20). Jesus also said, *“That the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave Me commandment, so I do”* (John 14:31). God loves Jesus. Jesus loves God.

**The strongest mutual love is one that is not only physical, sexual, and emotional, but also spiritual.**

The strongest mutual love is one that is not only physical, sexual, and emotional, but also spiritual.

### Order within the Relationship: A Line of Authority

God's model for the family order is given in verse 3 of 1 Corinthians 11: *“The head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.”*

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Just as God the Father is the head of Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ is the One who sent the Holy Spirit, so the order for mankind in marriage is Christ is head of man, man is head of woman, and parents are the head of their children. This is the line of authority. If that line is broken or ignored, conflict is automatic. Keep the line as God established it, and peace has an opportunity to flourish. Break the line of authority, and problems cannot help but emerge.

We will explore this line of authority and order more closely in the next chapter, but in order to lay a conceptual foundation for our discussion of husbands and wives, we need to understand several key truths that are part of what God established “*in the beginning*” (Genesis 1:1).

### A Divine Purpose: To Bear Fruit and Have Dominion

At the Creation, God created “*male and female*,” and we read in the first chapter of the Bible that God “*blessed them*” (vv. 27–28). God’s blessing was twofold: be fruitful and have dominion.

From the beginning, both male and female were to be fruitful. They were to produce, create, administrate, generate, and originate. What they produced was to be ongoing and self-producing. What was created was to create in turn. What was generated was to continue to generate. Until when? Until the whole earth was filled with the goodness of their work. God said, “*Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth*” (v. 28). This was not to be the work of men only or of women only. They were to be fruitful *together* and multiply *together* and fill the earth *together*.

From the beginning, both male and female were given dominion over this earth. There was no “dominion” of man over woman or woman over man. Male and female were to have dominion over God’s creatures—those creatures with beaks and gills and feathers and fur and hooves and claws and scales! God said, “*Subdue it [the earth]; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth*” (Genesis 1:28).

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To have dominion means to take authority over something. And with authority over something comes responsibility for that something. As a parent, for example, you have authority over your children, and, at the same time, you have responsibility for your children. You always have responsibility for those things over which you have authority.

To have dominion doesn't mean that you know everything by yourself or that you are capable of doing all things by yourself. It means that you are in relationship with God and, *through His revelation and insights imparted to you*, you know what you need to know to have authority over the things that God gives you authority over. Some of the knowledge that God will impart to you is knowledge about how others are to take part in the accomplishment of a task. Some of the knowledge is about timing, methods, priority setting, and the "limits" of your particular role in the accomplishment of a specific task or goal.

### ***Two Roles from One Being***

Initially, the Bible tells us that Adam, whose name literally means "mankind," was one entity. Then God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and He took a rib from Adam and created a woman out of man. Adam said,

*This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.*

(Genesis 2:23)

God pulled all the "female" out of Adam and turned that female part of his identity into Woman. The Hebrew word for *woman* in Genesis 2 also can be translated as *wife*. It literally means "man with a womb"—a wife capable of bearing a husband's child.

The Bible clearly reserves marriage for two people of the opposite sex. To be a husband, a person must be male. To be a wife, a person must be female. There is no provision whatsoever for two males to be husband and wife or for two females to have a husband and wife relationship. Marriage is for two people who are of opposite sex. The two *together* create one complete entity before God, or together they reflect the image of God.

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Female...wife...mother.

Male...husband...father.

The roles in marriage are highly gender specific!

A female qualifies to be a wife. A wife, in turn, qualifies to be a mother. Certainly, a female can become a mother before she becomes a wife—but that is out of God's divine order.

Being a male qualifies a person to be a husband, and, in turn, being a husband qualifies a man to be a father. Before a male is a husband, he has no authority over *any* female. It is only after he is a husband that he has authority over a wife. In the same way, a male has no authority over children until he becomes husband and *father*.

**The Bible clearly reserves marriage for two people of the opposite sex.**

### *Gender Differences In Functional Relationship*

Female and male are equals. They are equal in their command to be fruitful and to have dominion over the earth.

As female and male enter into a marriage relationship and take on the roles of husband and wife, they take on different but complementary roles. They take on different *functions* in the marriage. And any time you take on functions or tasks or work with another person, you will find that one person needs to take the lead and have the greater responsibility for the accomplishment of the work. This is true for large groups of people, small groups of people, and a “group” that has only two people in it. No two people can lead at the same time.

Certainly, two or more people can discuss an issue; two or more people can debate an issue; two or more people can offer opinions about an issue; two people can do work related to the accomplishment of a project—but one person needs to be in the “point” position of making a final decision and setting the direction of the work. The person who takes on that role is the person who has the authority over the work and the responsibility for it.

After the Fall in the Garden of Eden, Adam was cursed with a curse of work, or hard labor. As a husband, he was put into the point position. He was to provide for his wife, and in so doing, he

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was responsible for her. After the Fall, Eve, as a wife, was put in a “follower” position. God told Eve, “*Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you*” (Genesis 3:16).

It was after the Fall that Adam actually gave a name to Eve. Prior to the Fall, she was “woman” or “wife.” After the Fall, Adam named his wife Eve “*because she was the mother of all living*” (v. 20). As a mother, Eve was to know the curse of sorrow and pain in childbearing. In turn, Adam became a “father” to the children Eve bore.

Note that both Adam and Eve were created to be fruitful and have dominion. They were not created with the ability to be husband and wife or father and mother. They had to *learn* how to be good marriage partners and how to be good parents. They were created with an ability to have authority or to take the lead over animals, fish, birds, “creeping” creatures, and all the plants in the Garden. They had to learn what it meant to lead and follow in relationship one to the other.

Also note this. At no time do we find God saying that man is to rule over woman. A man is to have responsibility for and to have authority (or “rulership”) over *his own wife and family*. That’s where he functions as a husband. There is no place in God’s Word where we find God saying that men are to dominate women or have rule over any female who comes walking down the street. A man is a husband to one wife only, and he has rulership or leadership in his relationship with that one wife.

### ***Marriage Requires the Adoption of Roles***

Many men and women try to live after they are married as if they are still single. I’ve heard men say, “I’ll go where I want and do what I want.” Not if you want to be in God’s will, you won’t. I’ve heard women say, “No husband is going to tell me what I can and cannot do.” Yes, he will, if you want to be in God’s will.

Once you are married, you give up certain rights to your own freedom and self-expression.

The apostle Paul wrote about this to the Corinthians:

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*He who is unmarried cares for the things of the Lord; how he may please the Lord. But he who is married cares about the things of the world; how he may please his wife. There is a difference between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman cares about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit. But she who is married cares about the things of the world; how she may please her husband.*  
(1 Corinthians 7:32–34)

The unmarried woman is not in submission to a man. Her submission is totally to the Lord, and from Him she draws her ability to be fruitful and have dominion. The married woman submits her life to the Lord, but she also submits her life to her husband, and her “cares” become concerns about how she may please her husband.

A female has the choice to say “no” to the opportunity to be a wife. But when a female says “yes,” she takes on the identity of a wife. She takes on the responsibilities and privileges that are a part of being a wife according to God’s Word.

A male has the choice to say “no” to being married. But when a male takes a wife, he takes on the identity of a husband. He takes on the responsibilities and privileges that are a part of being a husband according to God’s Word.

### Marriage Requires Leaving and Cleaving

Marriage requires that both husband and wife “leave their parents” and “cleave”—or be joined—to their spouses. A husband is no longer subject to the authority of his parents; a wife is no longer subject to her parents. A new household is established—a new family is formed—at the time of a wedding.

A number of conflicts in marriage arise because one or both spouses hasn’t really “left home.” They’ve never really cut the ties that bind them to their parents. For a marriage to be successful, both husband and wife need to leave mother and father and place each other in the role of “first and foremost” in their lives.

If you are a parent, you need to anticipate this time of “leaving and cleaving” for your own sons and daughters. From the time

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you have your children, you need to start anticipating the day when your children will leave your home and create homes of their own. God's plan is that your children leave you and cleave to somebody else. When your child marries, your child needs to make his or her spouse "number one." At the time of their wedding, your child changes his or her foremost allegiance from you as a parent to the spouse.

**If you are married, accept the fact that you are married.**

To cleave to a spouse means to tie yourself closely to that spouse. It means to be married in every sense of the word and to accept "married" as your new identity.

If you are married, accept the fact that you are married! You aren't alone. You can't live totally for yourself. You must factor another person into your life.

If you aren't married, then you have a choice. But if you choose to be married, then you must choose God's rules regarding marriage.

To cleave means to share one schedule, one agenda, one set of goals and dreams, one "life" with your chosen spouse.

When you were single and went off for thirteen weeks in a row to do evangelistic or missionary work...great. But when you marry, you no longer do that—not without the full consent and participation of your spouse.

When you were single and you devoted four weeks to fasting and prayer...wonderful. But when you marry, you no longer do that—not without the full approval of your spouse.

When you were single and you devoted yourself to ministry with a single-hearted devotion...fine. But when you marry, you no longer can do that—your spouse comes before your ministry.

The Lord does not give a call to any man or woman that will divide a marriage.

God will not call a man to preach in Kalamazoo and have his family become a zoo. God is a God of order, of priority, of responsibility, of authority, of goodness—and the number one place for your Christian ministry is at home. As Paul wrote to the Galatians,

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*“Let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith”* (Galatians 6:10). Where is that household of faith first established? In homes of faithful men and women. Paul was talking about the church, but where is the church to be manifested? In the home. You and your spouse and your children are a household of faith if you are serving God and making your daily lives an act of worship before Him.

### **Both Spouses: Ongoing Submission to God**

A great deal is said about submission in marriage, but this foundational principle needs to be understood: both husband and wife are to be submitted to God.

Your first responsibility in your marriage is to God. What you will find, however, in submitting first to God is this: as you submit your life to God, you will be submitted to what God wants for you in your marriage.

The flesh never wants to submit. The flesh doesn't agree with God's truth. In fact, it rebels against God's truth. That's why faith is a must. A person must choose by faith to do things God's way.

You can't be a good husband or wife on your own strength. You need to have the Lord in your marriage. And in order to have the Lord in your marriage, you need to invite Him into it.

It takes as much submission to God and as much faith for a husband to love his wife as Christ loves the church, as it takes for a woman to respond to her husband as the church responds to Christ.

Submission and faith are required by both husbands and wives. The attitude of the heart must be to yield to God. The prevailing attitude must be to line up your life according to God's Word.

Submission doesn't work if only one person is submitted to doing things God's way. A husband has to submit to God's way; he has to submit to the plan and yield himself to becoming a husband who reflects Christ's love and provision. A wife has to submit to God's way. She has to yield to God first, so that she might be a wife who reflects the church's role as a loving, praising, submitted helpmate.

## God's Divine Plan for Your Marriage

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Both husband and wife must rebuke their own stubborn wills and choose to do things God's way—not the way that's defined on popular television talk shows or the way Aunt June Bug defines marriage. Are you willing to submit yourself to God's plan?

Both men and women need to understand that submission never reduces a person in God's eyes. Submission does not take away one bit of a person's potential or purpose. It doesn't diminish or reduce any of the gifts, talents, or skills a person has. Rather, submission puts a person into a position of obedience so God can use that person. When a wife submits to a husband, she is never "less" than her husband. Rather, she is fulfilling her role so that God can use her, use her husband, and use their marriage in a way that God desires.

When a man loves his wife and pours out himself to care for her, love her, protect and provide for her, and be available to her, he is not "less" than a man. Some husbands seem to think so. They think that if they give of themselves, they'll lose something. Whatever you give away of yourself, husband, God will grow back! He'll bless what you give. And in your giving, you are putting yourself, your wife, and your marriage into a position where God can use you and bless you in the way He desires.

What exactly does God desire? He desires for a married couple to reflect His nature on this earth, to be a witness to the saving grace of Jesus Christ, to raise up children in the Lord (both those to whom they give birth and those whom they lead to the Lord), and to be the recipients of His total blessing—physical, emotional, financial, material, and spiritual!

Isn't that what you want—for yourself, for your spouse, and for your children? The only way to receive this from God is to submit to doing things God's way! Your attitude toward God will determine your attitude toward your mate.

### **Both Spouses: Ongoing Service for God and to Each Other**

Just as both husbands and wives are called to ongoing submission to God, so both husbands and wives are called to ongoing service for God and each other.

## Resolving Conflict in Marriage

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**Your attitude toward God will determine your attitude toward your mate.**

Both husbands and wives are to continue ministering to the Lord and for the Lord. Both are to remain active in their witness to Christ Jesus as Savior and Lord. Both are to manifest the spiritual and natural gifts that God has given to them.

Husbands are called to serve their wives, just as Christ serves the church with His presence, protection, power, and provision. Christ laid down His life for the church. Husbands are called to lay down their pride and their selfishness to serve their wives.

Wives are called to serve their husbands, just as the church serves Christ with its praise, its practical service, its yielding to Christ's will, and its fulfillment of God's directives. Wives are called to lay down their pride and their selfishness to serve their husbands.

When we understand that both husbands and wives are to fill gender-specific roles, that they are called to ongoing submission to God, and that they are called to ongoing service to God and each other, then we have the proper God-ordained framework for truly understanding the roles prescribed for husbands and wives.