

Christian Marriage 101

by Eva Zarley

Submit to one another, out of reverence to 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 it 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. Eph. 5:22-23 [NIV]

If God's people need further convincing, then these same instructions can be found in 1 Peter 3:1-7, Colossians 3:18-19, and Titus 2:4-5. Each passage states it in a slightly different way, but all say the same thing. If we would only take these words to heart and apply them to our lives and marriages, there would be no need for all the seminars on marriage and marriage counselors would be seeking a new career. These instructions are the absolute basic principles for God's plan for marriage and they are also the same basic instructions that Jesus gave for all of God's children to follow in their treatment of God and one another. How could He have made it any simpler? Love thy neighbor as thyself. Your closest neighbor on this earth is your spouse and then your children. After that comes the rest of those you come in contact with.

How can the Christian expect to reach out, in Christ's love, to a lost and dying world, if they can't even treat their spouse with the most basic elements of love and respect? God's children need to start practicing the basic principles of Christianity, as given in the word of God, on those closest to them and move out from there, to reach the rest of the world.



I can't tell you how many times I have witnessed women, who claimed to be Christians, berate and scold their husbands, as if addressing a child, right in the presence of others. (Not that doing that in private is any more acceptable. It's just that the public embarrassment of her husband adds to her shame.) Women were created to be a companion and a helpmate to men. It is their role and should bring them fulfillment and joy to bless their beloved partner. I have heard women complaining about their husbands and their lives, tearing down the one person they are especially called to help and to build up. Yet these same women gush about how they want to be a light to the world for Christ. They are dangerously self-deceived.

The wise woman builds her house, but a foolish one tears hers down. Proverbs 14:1 [NIV]

Equally, I have witnessed men who are careless and indifferent to the spiritual welfare of their wives. They spend more time watching ball games, television or on their computers than reading God's word and praying for their families. How can they expect submission and respect, if they embitter their wives?

Why are we failing, as Christians, to bear the basic fruit of our faith, even within the simpler confines of our marriages? There is a rampant disease of selfishness, manipulation, ill-temperedness and lack of self control, among those professing to be Christians, these days. It is no wonder the divorce rate in the church is equal to that of the world. No marriage can survive, much less grow, if it is not nurtured and watered with the cleansing truth of God's word and prayer.

Many times I have attended a church social function and heard coarse jesting in the form of gender-bashing, among members of the body and I have even heard this type of "humor" from the mouth of the speaker in the pulpit. Brothers and sisters, this should not be so.

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. Eph. 4:29

Why are we not seeking the fruit that as Christians, we should be bearing? Why are we not bearing that fruit in the presence of our mates, so that they can benefit from the growth we claim to have? If you aren't continuously practicing patience, love, peace, joy, endurance, gentleness, humility, kindness and faithfulness with your spouse, it can safely be assumed that your marriage is eventually going to be in trouble and your mate will become discouraged.

A healthy marriage has no place for faultfinding, bitterness and unforgiveness. In fact, there is no allowance for these indulgences in the Christian heart at all. Repent and get rid of it. Grudge-holding will not achieve any results but your own

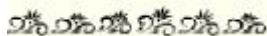
destruction, both of yourself and your marriage. I have known of couples where one partner will leave home in a stormy rage or subject their spouse to days of "the silent treatment." This is simply unacceptable in the Christian home and one's spiritual maturity, when a Christian does these things, is of great concern. I would lovingly urge such a person to repent and humble himself, before God and spouse, and come into agreement with God's word.



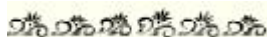
In your anger, do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold. Ephesians 4:26-27 [NIV]

Handle differences with prayer and fasting. If your spouse has offended you, why not trust God to speak to your spouse, through His Holy Spirit? Patiently loving and showing Christ, by your example, is far more effective and convicting to another soul, than a stream of angry words, uttered in a spirit of self-righteousness and offense.

Repent of any method you would use to manipulate or control your spouse. Stop thinking you have understanding of a particular situation, or your mate's thoughts or motivations. Repent of thinking you know what's best, or what you think your mate should be doing or not doing. Only God has the entire picture in view. Only He is qualified to be in control. Humble yourselves, as a couple, before Him and pray, asking for His guidance in every disagreement and indeed, every situation. Stop trying to lord over one another, as unto Christ. It's that simple. Why should it be so hard?



If you are blessed with a Christian marriage and would like to see your marriage bloom with peace and tranquility, producing the fruit of the Spirit of God, examine yourself rightly this day and pray this prayer with all your heart: Lord Jesus, examine me and show me the errors of my ways. Show me the ways I have failed to represent your image to my mate. Lord I repent of manipulation and control, of unkindness and harshness and nonrespect toward my beloved, whom you have given me. Please lead me into all truth and strengthen me to be obedient to Your word and faithful to Your love. In Jesus' name, Amen.



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Thank you, and God bless you.
Vic and Eva Zarley

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