

Love and relationships, Part C: MARRIAGE AND RELATIONSHIPS

Target:

- ☐ To grasp the responsibilities of marriage and other long-term relationships, and keeping relationships in their proper place.

Key verses:

- ☐ **1 Corinthians 13:13**—And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.
- ☐ **John 15:13**—Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.
- ☐ **Matthew 25:40b**—Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.

Recommended reading:

- ☐ “Marriage and Home” in *Discovering Truth—Bible Basics*.

Prayer, praise and meditation: “Thank You for my blessings!”

Thank You for all of the wonderful things You've made. I can't help but rejoice when I see Your glorious creation.

Thank You for the eyes You've given me, so that I can enjoy the beautiful scenery—everything from the small, foraging bee to the marvelous sunset.

Thank You for my ears with which I can hear the lovely sounds of the cheerful chirping birds, as well as the heartwarming voices of my loved ones. Thank You for my voice with which I can praise You and share sweet, intimate words from my heart.

Thank You for taste, to enjoy all of the many flavors You've made. Thank You for smell, to absorb the arousing scent of a lover, the spirit-lifting scent of a flower, or the mouthwatering aroma of my favorite foods.

Oh, my sweet Lord, I could go on forever thanking You for all of my blessings, which are innumerable. Everything that I love and enjoy is because of You. You've given me so much love, joy, happiness, and fulfillment in life.

Thank You for good health, appetite, sound sleep, vigorous exercise, and loving fellowship with my Family. Jesus, I give You credit for all of these things, and much more. I could never live without You. You're the greatest. I adore You.

(To Jesus With Love, book 3)

Assignment: Prayer list for loved ones

- ☐ Do you have a prayer list for your loved ones? Look over your list and ask the Lord to show you anyone else you should be praying for regularly, and any specific prayer requests for others you should bring before Him.
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SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

Contents

- From the Class
- Loving Interaction
- The Beauties, Promises, and Rewards of Married Love
- Success in Marriage

FROM THE CLASS

Part 1. Marriage—a union of love

Marriage—originated by God to fulfill our needs

- Genesis 2:18, 20-25

(Father David:) Marriage is more than sex or friendship or even a business partnership for the Lord's work! It is the most intimate, humbling, loving and self-sacrificial relationship between human beings in all of life. "No greater love hath any man than this: that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). This is love, real love, true love—the willingness of a husband to sacrifice himself for his wife, the eagerness of a wife to lay down her life for her husband! This is supernatural love, divine love, God's Love, more than human!

If you want to learn something about unselfishness, humility and sharing, just get married! Marriage is a very humbling thing. That's one reason it's real good for you to get married: It humbles you and knocks some of that damn pride out of you!—'Cause the Lord knows you don't need it! Otherwise you can be independent and you can do as you please.

(Mop, Marriage:86, 13 and ML #259:21)

God has ordained and blessed marriage

(Jesus:) The benefits of marriage are endless! Marriage multiplies love, and since I am Love, marriage multiplies and magnifies Me in the lives of the people involved and their children, which often result from such love. As those who are married are fruitful and multiply, they fill the world with My children, little messengers of love from Heaven. Marriage keeps people together and provides a good team for raising children.

(ML #3194:4)

(Father David:) For thousands of years the family has been the basic building block of society. If your families are good, your society's going to be good. But if your families fall apart, your society is going to fall apart. As I always say, "The family that prays together stays together," and in the societies where the family has stayed together, the society has stayed together and been much better.

(ML #2433:76)

- Proverbs 5:18; Proverbs 18:22; Matthew 19:4-5

Those who forbid to marry are in error

- 1 Timothy 4:1-3

Even priests, bishops and church officials are advised to marry

- 1 Corinthians 9:5; 1 Timothy 3:2
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Divorce

The ideal is that marriage be for life

(Father David:) Marriage is supposed to be for life, except for the most unusual circumstances! Everything humanly possible should be done to stick together, both for your sake as well as for the sake of the children and the work of God! So don't throw in the towel too soon!

If you can't get along with the mate you now have under almost any circumstances, how do you know you're going to be able to get along with the next one under almost any other circumstances? If you want to leave your mate simply because there is something about them you don't like, you're going to want to leave every mate you ever get, because there's bound to be something you don't like about each one.

(GT, Marriage: 80; Mop, Marriage:19, 58)

Marriages should stick together as much as possible, but divorce is permissible when necessary. If partners can't resolve their differences over time and being together is having a bad effect on them, their children, and their service to the Lord, it can sometimes be better for them to separate than to stay together. In exceptional cases, the Lord may also specifically show two people to amicably part ways in order to achieve different goals for the Lord's service.

(Father David:) In most cases I would strongly advise parents with children to try to stick it out and survive without separation for the sake of the children. [But] the Lord is very reasonable and merciful and understanding and loving and kind, so that if two people simply do not want to live with each other He does not make rules to force them to do so, as man does.

It's a heart-breaking thing to do, it's a home-breaking thing to do, it's a terrible thing to have to do, but it's much worse to continue on in such terrible contention and dissension and argument and difference of opinion and difference of spirit and difference of goal and desires and differences in methods of training the children, differences in your desire to serve the Lord.

(Mop, Marriage:44, 42, 99)

Conditions for divorce

(Father David:) If it be with the consent of both parties, divorce is possible and permissible with the understanding of possible remarriage to someone else. However, if either party objects to the divorce, it is strictly forbidden according to the Scriptures! It must be with mutual consent and uncontested, and it must be for the agreed reason that neither cares to live with the other any longer.

However, where children are involved, this should be avoided by all means if possible, unless there is a very good reason why the relationship is no longer good for the children themselves, where parental strife is a constant bad influence on the children or could even endanger their physical safety.

(ML #359:3-4, DB 6)

See also: Permanent Marital Separation Rules in the Love Charter

Building a happy marriage

- Ecclesiastes 9:9a; Ecclesiastes 4:9

Take time to work on your marriage

(Maria:) You know, it takes a little time to construct a good marriage, a happy marriage, but it's going to have its rewards in a lot more peace, a lot more harmony, a lot less worry, a lot less emotional stress, a lot less problems—even a lot less health problems!

(ML #2504:17)

(Father David:) Success in marriage is much more than finding the right person!—It is a matter of being the right person. Marriage should be as equal as possible, as sharing as possible. You should talk together, pray together, love together, discuss together and then decide and agree together.

One of the greatest assets to a good marriage is honesty, along with a sense of humor.

The most damaging thing that can happen in a marriage is to lose faith in each other, and worst of all faith in God.

(Mop, Marriage:35, 82, 12, 129)

I've never heard anyone on their deathbed say, 'I wish I had spent more time with my business.'" —Lee Iacocca

In the Mosaic law, the Lord directed that a newly married couple were to spend much time together.

- Deuteronomy 24:5

The sexual aspect of marriage

(Father David:) Marriage is a sexual relationship, or else you could simply have stayed good friends! Marriage is a sharing of all things! It is the most satisfying, most strengthening, and most lasting relationship on this earth! You share the parts of your body as well as your thoughts!

(ML #123:36)

Sex is just a portion of marriage

(Father David:) Married love is not just sex, affection, and romance! Although it is all of these, it must be more if it is to last and be an enduring relationship for the glory of God—an example of His own relationship with you! It must be a God-given love and a spirit of self-sacrifice in which each prefers the happiness of the other to his own! This is true love, the only kind that lasts!

Sex is really a very small part of a marriage—only about 2% or so. It's a very small portion compared to all the other factors that go into a marriage and into making it work.

To have real lasting enduring genuine love, it must be based upon a more enduring foundation than mere fleshly gratification. It must be an unselfish desire to protect and to help and to make someone else happy.

(ML #154:63; 3211:105; Mop, Marriage: 114)

Part 2. Marriage and sex

“The bed undefiled”

As we studied in the previous class, sexual relations are a gift from God.

Sex in marriage is pure and ordained of God

- Hebrews 13:4; Proverbs 5:18-19

It was ordained for the procreation of the race

- Genesis 1:27; Jeremiah 29:6

In marriage man and woman are joined as one flesh

- Mark 10:6-8

Sex is a marital right, not to be used to punish or reward

- 1 Corinthians 7:3

Husbands should treat wives with honor and love not merely as sexual objects

- 1 Thessalonians 4:4

(Extracts from Word Basics, Marriage)

Your marriage is the primary relationship

As has been made evident, sex outside of marriage is permissible providing the Law of Love is adhered to. However, for those already married, your marriage is your primary responsibility. If your mate feels abandoned or left out of your activities, then you need to focus on getting that rectified. You should not pursue another relationship to the detriment of your marriage.

(Father David:) The Lord is willing to do anything for you if you love and please Him.—So should you husbands be willing to do anything for your wives [and vice versa] if you love and want to please them! If a marriage goes on the rocks, the rocks are

often in the bed!—So solve these sex problems as soon as you can, if you want a happy, healthful, contented and satisfying marriage. Remember: happiness is not found by pursuing it for yourself.—Happiness finds those who give it to others!—So do your best to make your mate happy, and you'll find this makes you happy too—if you really love, as God loves, unselfishly. Selfishness destroys any marriage. Try a little real love and unselfishness by the grace of God!—It works wonders! You are to try to please your mate, not just yourself, God says.—Try it!—You'll like it!

Real love is preferring the happiness of your mate to your own! "In honor preferring one another." This brings true happiness to all.—Including God!—Believe it or not, He wants you to be happy!—That's one reason He created sex and marriage, for your pleasure, enjoyment, satisfaction, companionship, fellowship, team work, sharing and children.

(ML #259:148-149)

(Father David:) Just because we have sexual freedom, it does not mean freedom from marriage. We have not abandoned marriage! I still believe in real old-fashioned love and falling in love and wanting to take care of somebody and help somebody and be their mate, be half of them, and have their children!—Those who take the responsibilities of marriage seriously, and consider that they should be loyal to each other, are loyal to each other, and don't have any idea of ever parting if they can help it.

(ML #2433:42, 64; 2455:103)

(Maria:) The Lord makes it clear that you have a lasting and serious commitment to your marriage partner. Part of that commitment is being willing to invest the time needed to keep your relationship loving, strong and unified. Even if you're involved in another love relationship, you are bound by the Lord to put your primary relationship, your marriage, first.

(ML #3210:58)

Part 3. Relationships in perspective

In the previous class, we talked about keeping our enjoyment of God's pleasures in perspective, by keeping Him in first place. Let's look at bit more at this in the context of personal relationships, including marriage. The principles to remember again are: Are these relationships glorifying God and good for His work? Are they good for others? Are they good for ourselves?

God first!

Our relationship with God and obedience to Him should have priority, even over family relationships.

God called Abraham to leave his family and homeland to go to a new location unknown to him.

- Genesis 12:1-3

Jesus also spoke of leaving loved ones behind when necessary:

- Matthew 10:34-37; Matthew 19:29

Don't let anything displace God's preeminent position in your heart and mind, let alone crowd Him out of your life altogether.

(Father David:) We are told to love (or worship) not the world, neither the things that are in the world, such as the love of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life (1 John 2:15-17). He did not say you would not like or enjoy or need or desire, with even His God-given desire, the things of this world and this life, including the lust of the flesh, which is very necessary for certain purposes, particularly for the survival and very existence of the flesh. But you're not to love them, worship or lust after them excessively and intemperately, inordinately, more than is necessary, more than is meet, to the point that you put these things before the greater and higher values and even more essential necessities of the spirit, which are very necessary to the survival and eternal existence of the spiritual man.

For if you love the material world more than the spiritual, then it becomes a form of worship of the Creation more than the Creator, and God and His spiritual world refuse to take second place in your affections and your interests or even in the activities of your life. So, He says, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, all thy mind, all thy strength and all thy soul, and thy neighbor as thyself. He says these are the first and greatest of all the commandments in importance, and that you shall have

no other gods before Him, for He is a jealous God, and He desires your love and for you to love Him first of all, above all, and seek first His Kingdom! But then if you do, He's happy to add all these other things unto you, including every desire of your desirous little heart—as long as you delight yourself in Him!

But if you put these desires of the flesh first above God and others and the needs of your spirit, then you'll find that nothing ever satisfies, not even the most total indulgence in the flesh! You will become as the world-famed poet, Lord Byron, when he despaired at the height of his fame with these words: "I've drunk of every fount of pleasure and quaffed every cup of fame, yet, alas. I die of thirst!" For the things of this earth can only satisfy your body, but only God and His true love can ever fill that aching spiritual void of your heart which He created for Himself alone! For true happiness comes not in your personal pursuit for selfish pleasure and satisfaction, but in finding God and giving His life to others and bringing them happiness! Then happiness pursues and overtakes and overwhelms you, personally, without even seeking it for yourself!

(ML #250:38-39, 42)

Nothing but Jesus will satisfy!

(Peter:) If you're putting the Lord and His work first and His Kingdom first, with all your heart and soul and mind and strength, then everything else isn't going to make that much difference. The Lord can send blessings your way then because He can trust you with them, but if you forsake your plow and your relationship with the Lord to run off and get involved with some personal relationship, the Lord's not going to bless it and the Enemy can use it as a distraction!

The Lord is the only place you'll ever find the comfort and the peace that you need. Every other situation or person will fail, your jobs, everything. If you put your hopes in natural relationships, they will fail. It just doesn't work! The Lord's pretty smart, He designed things so that the only thing that really fills the void is going to be Him and nothing else is going to satisfy!

(Peter #35:18, 23; DB 3)

Responsibilities to our greater family, the “Church”

The Apostle Paul used the illustration of a body to help us understand how the Lord sees our unity. And as one body, we are married to Christ.

- Romans 12:5; 1 Corinthians 12:12-14, 26-27
- See also: 1 Corinthians 10:17 and all of 1 Corinthians chapter 12.

Caring for our “greater family”

Jesus made it very clear, by His own example of putting His spiritual “family” above His physical family, that our relationships with those who share our faith are very important.

- Matthew 12:46-50

In Bridges Class 4C, we discussed briefly how the Church is the “Bride of Christ.” In the next Bridge we will look at this concept in depth.

- Revelation 19:7

Loving and caring for each other

- Romans 12:10

As parts of the Bride of Christ we should love and care for each other, whether we are related physically or not. Our personal and marital relationships should enhance our unity and strength together, not detract from it. Father David coined the term “One Wife” to encapsulate what the relationship should be like amongst Family members as God’s Bride. While the marriage unit is important and the little families are the building blocks for our greater family, in order to be the samples that the Lord wants us to be, we can’t selfishly put marriage or the individual family unit above all else. In our communal Homes, the ideal that we strive for is that everyone, married or single, feels loved and included, and that all the children receive quality care without partiality.

The Law of Love commands us to “love our neighbor as ourselves,” and that includes not only our own spouse and children, but also our spiritual brothers and sisters—to whom we are spiritually married together with Christ—and their children. This of course requires supernatural love that only God can give, and is one of the most difficult and sacrificial aspects of truly living the Law of Love. It’s our human nature to be selfish and

put our own needs or those of our loved ones first. But it's a vital part of being a disciple to extend that love to others! "By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another" (John 13:35).

This means we need a great love—to care not only about those closest to us, but also our fellow-believers.

(Father David, in prophecy:) Putting the greater marriage [to the body of Christ, His Church] first doesn't mean you need to minimize your ties to your personal family, but it means giving the greater marriage the proper importance. ... It means that instead of drawing a circle around your own little family that will shut others out, you are to draw a circle that brings [your spiritual Family] in. For example, it doesn't mean loving your own children less, but it means taking the children of [these] others into your arms, your heart, your lives, and trying to love them as much as you love your own. It means bringing others up to the level of love, understanding, sympathy, concern, and all the things you naturally feel for your personal family.

This is a complicated concept, because the Lord wants us to love others as we love ourselves. He wants us to be considerate of their needs, to give of our time, strength, love, and prayer, to do what we can to make sure all our brethren are well cared for, happy and complete, as much as possible. On the other hand, He purposely, distinctly, and within His will gives you greater natural feelings for your personal family, for your one wife or mate, and also for your own children. He does that because He knows we all need some personal touch in our lives. Children need personal attention and personal love, to feel like they belong to somebody, that they have a place. They need to feel the security, comfort and warmth of the family unit.

So there's a place for both—the personal, individual family and the greater family. Each has its purpose, and you can love one without neglecting the other.

I would say the tendency of most people, of course, is to have a deeper love for their personal family, their immediate mate and their own children. Our priorities usually center around our own mates and our own children—not only because of our natural selfishness and independence, but also because of God-given desires and burdens that He's put in our hearts to care for and protect our individual family units.

It's very natural and understandable to be more concerned about your own mate and your own children—that they have their needs supplied, that they are happy, that they feel loved and content and challenged. It's good to love your mate and children in this way, and it's part of your duty as a husband or wife or father or mother.

People of the world are also concerned for their immediate family. But it takes the supernatural love of Jesus, the miraculous grace of God, to try to love others as much as you love your personal family, and to care as much about their personal needs and their feelings of happiness, security, contentment and challenge.

(ML #3211:49-54, edited)

Unselfishness in personal relationships: The FFing example

The key for all relationships, no matter whether short term or long term like marriage, is that we exercise the Law of Love and care more for others than we do about ourselves.

(Jesus:) Real love begins with an effort, because the mind must choose to turn from selfishness. Now I know that's the ideal, because of course you're still human and subject to human emotions, and there's always some thought of self there. But the point is to try to live My Law of Love, which is not focusing on yourself and what you want. It's taking others into consideration, and looking to Me and what I would have you do.

(ML #3455:167)

"Flirty Fishing"—an example of unselfish, sacrificial love

- Matthew 4:19

One example of unselfish love is the witnessing method which the Family used to use called "Flirty Fishing," also known as "FFing." This was practiced by some Family members from the mid 1970s to the mid 1980s, and discontinued in 1987. It is not practiced now, as Charter Family Disciples are not permitted to have sexual relations with anyone outside of that membership circle, but we thought you'd be interested in hearing about it.

This excerpt from one of our statements explains FFing:

In part as a response to the sexual liberality of the early '70s, Father David presented a more intimate and personal, voluntary form of evangelism, which became known as "Flirty Fishing" or "FFing." He offered in his writings the challenging proposal

that since Jesus is the physical manifestation and embodiment of God's love for humanity, then we as Christians are in turn responsible to be living samples to others of God's great all-encompassing love.

Although sex and love are not necessarily directly linked, sex was nevertheless seen as an undeniable human need, and one that much of humanity equates with love. Therefore, Father David proposed that the boundaries of expressing God's love to others could at times go beyond just showing kindness and doing good deeds. He suggested that for those who were in dire need of physical love and affection, even sex could be used as evidence to them of the Lord's love. "If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,' but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?" (James 2:15-16 NKJV).

The motivation, guiding principle, and reasoning behind the FFing ministry was that through this sacrificial proof of love, some would better accept and understand God's great love for them. The goal was that they would come to believe in and receive God's own loving gift of salvation through His Son, Jesus, who gave His life for them. By this unorthodox method David felt many would find the Lord's love and salvation, who never would have otherwise.

(From the Statement "The Origins of a Movement")

The Family of Love—Sin or Salvation?

(Father David:) From pretty young shop girls and waitresses and secretaries to elderly widows and rich old dowagers; from handsome young clerks, bookkeepers, technicians, white-collar workers and engineers to wealthy businessmen, retired widowers, single shopkeepers and even bachelor farmers, we found them all the same:

Hungry, lonely, empty, unhappy, dissatisfied and spiritually destitute—all longing for love of all kinds, but especially for a love they had never known before, true love, sincere love, genuine love, the truly great love of their life, the Love of all loves of the Lover of all lovers, Who alone can satisfy that deepest yearning of every human soul for total love and complete understanding.

He is the power and life of the universe that some people call God but that the Bible itself calls Love, for "God is love." (1John 4:8)

He's pictured in His Son Christ Jesus, a Man Who loved everybody, even the poorest and the worst of all. He is the Lover of all lovers, Who came for love and lived in love and died for love that we might live and love forever!

But He has no hands but your hands and he has no lips but yours and He has no eyes but your eyes and no body but your own, for you are His Body, His Bride for whom He died that you might live and love others as He did with your hands, your lips, your mouth, your tongue, your eyes and your body broken for them as He was for you, your blood shed for them as His was for you, your life given for them as His was for you, to even die for them as He did for you.

So we soon found out we could not enter these places for purely personal selfish recreation, exercise and entertainment. We could not come face to face and body to body with those who clung so desperately to us with such a yearning for us to meet their needs. We could not withhold bread from the hungry—the Bread of Life, Christ Jesus, nor drink from the thirsty—the Water of His Word, which satisfy the most ultimate longings of the human soul.

Flesh can satisfy flesh, but only spirit can satisfy spirit, and we soon found that we had to give of both to "satisfy all their needs according to His riches in glory." (Philippians 4:19) We could not withhold any need from the love-starved as long as we had it by us and within our power to meet it and to give our all for their healing and His glory.

We soon found there was no stopping place, no limit to which God would not go to save a poor lost soul with His infinite love and unlimited mercy! We soon found our hearts irresistibly drawn into the vacuum of their hearts to satisfy their spirits, even as our bodies were irresistibly drawn together and sucked into each other to satisfy their flesh!

There was nowhere to draw the line between the two, flesh and spirit. There was no halfway, there was no "almost." It had to be "all or nothing at all" or they could not believe it was real love. They could not understand how you could offer to fill their heart but not their body, to satisfy their soul but not their hungry flesh.

The two were inseparable, the one could not go without the other and we had to feed them both together. "If a brother or sister be naked and destitute of daily food [a necessary physical need like sex] and one of you say unto them, 'Depart in peace! Be ye warmed and filled!'—Notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit?"

"Even so faith, if it hath not works is dead" (James 2:15-17). In other words, if in the faith of God you really love them, they cannot understand it or believe it unless you really show them by some visible tangible work or action that puts your words into works and puts your faith into effect and makes it fact and not fiction, a sample, not just a sermon!

(ML #502R; DB 1)

Flirty Fishing was tremendously fruitful!

(Peter:) The FFing ministry, which often—but not always—involved sex with those we were witnessing to was a ministry which was tremendously fruitful, with over 100,000 people won to Jesus because of our sacrificial love for the lost and willingness

to "lay down our lives" for those we were trying to reach with the Lord's love and message. When we get to Heaven and meet those who were saved because of FFing, we will be thrilled and so thankful that we were willing to give our all to win them to the Lord.

(ML #2858:22)

Despite its fruitfulness, we stopped the method for various reasons.

(Peter:) Some of the reasons for this change [stopping FFing] were because the Lord wanted us to put more of an emphasis on follow-up and grounding our converts in the Word. It also so happened that the plague of AIDS had begun its rampage through the world at that time, so it was the Lord's perfect timing for us to stop our FFing ministry!

(ML #2858:24)

FFing was an example of truly sacrificial love that we can learn from, even though we no longer use this method of witnessing.

It's God's love that grants us the liberty to share with others.—A genuinely sacrificial love, one that truly prefers the happiness of others to our own. The Lord's idea in teaching and giving us His Law of Love was to enable us to help and meet the needs of others, often at great personal cost and sacrifice!

When Father David wrote the Letters to the Family about sharing sexually with others, it was definitely considered a very sacrificial "cross," "laying down our lives for the brethren," and wasn't looked on as any kind of a self-gratifying plaything at all.

These freedoms were extended to those who would use them as a tool to help, heal and fill a desperate need. In FFing it was to fulfill a physical need in order to reach and win their hearts, enabling us to then fill their spiritual needs as well.

(ML #2718:40-42)

Part 4. Another side to relationships

It's not always the Lord's will to pursue relationships

There are occasions when for reasons such as pressing responsibilities or personal lessons, we need to forego the pleasure of intimate relationships for a time. Sometimes this can include stepping back from an emotional relationship, giving up a relationship that has been bearing bad fruit in either partner's life, or abstaining from a sexual encounter or relationship that would not bear good fruit or could be hurtful to others or detrimental to the Lord's work.

(Maria:) There are quite a few good verses in the Bible about restraining yourselves. You don't have to do everything you may feel like doing, and you can certainly control yourself for the sake of God's work!

—See 1 Corinthians 9:27; Proverbs 16:32; 25:28; Luke 21:34; Romans 6:12-13; 13:14; Colossians 3:5.

You just have to bring your body and your mind into subjection, and whatever you do, do all to the glory of God, and nothing to the hurt of others. The Apostle Paul talks a lot about bringing our bodies into subjection. (1 Corinthians 9:27) If we didn't have such feelings or thoughts, we wouldn't have to bring them into subjection. In other words, there are some things that are all right in our minds and hearts, but when we start physically expressing them, that's when it's wrong.

We should not always think that every time we have some feeling of love for someone that it's just got to be acted upon! It's not always right or "expedient" that it should be, and I think we're too used to applying the principle that "'God is Love' and 'Love is God' so love can't be wrong."—But we need to make sure that we add the rest of the rule too.—If it doesn't hurt anybody!—A husband or wife or children or people you are responsible for, in a bad sample to them or neglect of them. I don't think we think enough about that second phrase and condition a lot of the time. We need to explore the possibilities of who it might hurt before we get into a love relationship!

It's obvious that not all strong emotions of desire, even for love or sex, come from the Lord.

Love is not wrong if we keep it in the proper place. Feelings are not wrong either, but they shouldn't always be expressed. In other words, we don't always have to fulfill the "lusts" or desires of the flesh. Even some of the good feelings and desires we have should not always be fulfilled in any major behavior or activity.

(ML #2536:9; ML #2590:49; Maria #60:9; FSM 56; ML #3485:183; ML #2590:53)

(Jesus:) Many others who have chosen to give their lives to serve Me have had to give up much more. Priests, monks and nuns down through the ages have forsaken sex and any intimate contact with others, even conversation, to live in solitude, contemplation and prayer, forsaking all carnal desires, contact with the world and stimulating experiences. I've given you, My Family of Love, the freedoms of the Law of Love that you might live My love more fully, and reach out and share them with others you come in contact with. I wish you to live in love and enjoy life to the full.

Just remember that these pleasures are a blessing, a bonus, a privilege, and that all you can be assured of and expect are service and sacrifice. The rest is a blessing of My love, but not entirely essential to doing your job for Me.

(ML #3216:51-52)

Being alone is sometimes God's plan

It is not the Lord's plan for every one of us to have constant companionship. Sometimes we go through periods when we are alone, without the comfort and support of a personal relationship. If that's our situation, we need to learn to be content with the Lord, realizing our relationship with Him is the most important and valuable of all.

- Hebrews 13:5

Loneliness can cause us to be more dependent on the Lord, which is a good thing.

(Maria:) Lots of people are lonesome if they don't have any human beings to depend on, but that's why the Lord takes loved ones away or doesn't provide help or companionship from others, so we will depend on Him and get close to Him, we'll hear from Him and get our orders from Him.

(Maria #60:48; FSM 56)

(Jesus:) I choose to bestow My love on each person in a special way. At times I call some to be wholly and completely Mine, without physical companionship of others, because I wish to give them My love in a special way, or I wish to receive more of their love.

It takes an effort to put all else out of your mind and be wholly Mine. But there is a place in each heart that only I can fill—and those who try to fill it with other things will sooner or later learn that they do not satisfy completely, and if they want to be fully used of Me, they must reserve that place for Me, and Me alone.

You who struggle with loneliness there on Earth, please see it as a gift of love from My hand, that I have chosen to withhold what you see as good—intimate physical companionship—in order to give you My best, what I know you need the most! And Here in My Heavenly Kingdom, all the tears are wiped away and desires are fulfilled! Can you not endure this for Me, so that you might be close to Me and able to be fully used of Me for the purpose I created you for?

(ML #3216:154-155, 158)

Sometimes the solution to loneliness is looking for ways to give love to others rather than get love.

(Father David:) You must give, and it shall be given unto you. Love begets love. I knew a woman once who was always seeking a new lover, a new love, but never finding one that satisfied or lasted, because she was always seeking to get love, to receive love, to be loved. So when I suggested to her that perhaps she needed to learn how to give love, and to love unselfishly for the benefit and happiness of another, after years of searching, this struck her as an entirely new thought that had never occurred to her before! She went out soon and found what she was looking for all the time by trying to find someone who she could make happy by giving her love to them.

So maybe that's what's wrong with you—you've been looking for someone to make you happy.—Maybe you need to look for someone to make them happy, and then happiness will find you! For whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. It's just one of God's rules and laws of the spirit—just as definite and certain as some of the scientific laws of physics, such as gravity. The laws of the spirit, however, never fail! They always work—either for you or against you, according to how you obey them, and whether or not you obey them.—And the first law is the Law of Love—unselfish love—love for Him and others. If you will obey that one and give that love which is His and their due, so shall ye also receive, for with what measure ye mete unto other men's bosoms, so shall they also mete unto your bosom.

(ML #250:43b-44)

The Lord wants us to trust Him, and if it's His will, He'll bring someone for us.

(Excerpts of prayer:) If we'll just pass the test and put You first, delight ourselves in You and Yours most of all, then You can trust us with other things, Lord, because they will not come between us. They will not supersede nor overshadow nor distract, but they will supplement and be a help and merely augment the work that we're doing in our ministry.

(ML #1380:16; DB 1)

Single or married, the most important thing is our relationship with the Lord!

(Maria:) The Lord has made provision for all of us to love Him, to find our love in Him, and find our strength and our security and our companionship and our needs in Him, because without Him we won't be happy, and like He said, the marriage will collapse. So we might as well forget our own physical, earthly relationships unless they focus on the Lord.—Not just in name only, but really focusing on the Lord and making Him the center of our relationships.

The Lord ... can be a wonderful lover and friend and filler of all our needs in whatever state we are in. If the Lord has a job for you to do that He wants you to do together, then you have to do it together. If He wants you to do it singly, then you need to do it singly. And the Lord says we shouldn't compare. We shouldn't say, "Well, couples are better off." There are a lot of married couples that look at the singles and think, "Wow! We wish we were single! We wouldn't be so distracted and we wouldn't have all these demands on our time. We wouldn't have to worry about each other and talk to each other, and we could have more time to love the Lord!"

But then the singles say, "Boy, we're so lonely! We wish we could be mated!" So that's normal human nature—each one looks at the other and wishes they could be in a different state than the one they're in. But the Lord says you don't have to do that, and you shouldn't do that, because ... He says, "I can be whatever you need in whatever state I've placed you, and whatever kind of relationship you're in—or no relationship. You just all need to have a relationship with Me." And the Lord is showing us more and more and helping us to be able to do that more than ever before, because it's a new day and He knows how important our connection with Him is. So He's teaching us step by step how to be closer to Him and how to love Him more, because He needs us to have that closeness to Him.

So the main point is: How are we going to do the best job for the Lord, each one of us? The Lord knows what's best for each of us, and what's best for our ministry and calling. And if we'll just seek Him, He'll give us the kind of situation that He knows we need, that will be best for His work and best for Him, and best for us.

So if that's your calling and if the Lord is calling you just to love Him and not be distracted or involved in your heart with someone else, then that's the place you want to be.

Of course, at the same time the Lord's saying don't be selfish, there's still your Family to love and you still need to love each other. But in some cases it's not like a permanent, full-time, in-love relationship. He still wants us to love each other and realize that the love we give others is His love to them, and their love for us is His love to us. So praise the Lord! He wants us to all love more: to love Him more and love each other more with His love. Thank You Lord!

(ML #3001:51, 61-62, 64-66)

Conclusion

Remember:

- Marriage is a union of love ordained by God to fulfill our needs.
 - Those who forbid to marry are in error.
 - Marriages should stick together as much as possible, but divorce is permissible when necessary.
 - Take time to work on your marriage!
 - Sex in marriage is pure and ordained of God.
 - In marriage man and woman are joined as one flesh.
 - Sex is a marital right, not to be used to punish or reward.
 - Husbands should treat wives with honor and love not merely as sexual objects.
-

- Part of the marriage commitment is being willing to invest the time needed to keep your relationship loving, strong and unified. Even if you're involved in another love relationship, you are bound by the Lord to put your primary relationship, your marriage, first.
- Our relationship with God and obedience to Him should have priority over family relationships.
- Don't let anything displace God's preeminent position in your heart and mind, let alone crowd Him out of your life altogether.
- Jesus made it very clear that our relationships with those who share our faith are very important. As parts of the Bride of Christ we should love and care for each other, whether we are related physically or not.
- Our personal and marital relationships should enhance our unity and strength with the "Church," not detract from it.
- If and when we find ourselves alone, without the comfort and support of a personal relationship, we need to learn to be content with the Lord, realizing our relationship with Him is the most important and valuable of all.
- Loneliness can cause us to be more dependent on the Lord, which is a good thing.
- Love begets love!
- Single or married, the most important thing is our relationship with the Lord!

ADDITIONAL READING

Loving Interaction!

(Maria:) These messages are not all on the same subject, but are more like a potpourri of counsel and practical instruction on different topics. I pray they will be a blessing to you, and that as you apply these things to your personal life and learn and grow from them, they will lighten your load and make your working and loving relationships flow smoother!

(ML #3234:9)

Showing Love by Being Kind and Courteous!

(Father David, in prophecy:) When you show people love in little ways, when you show people little courtesies and are well-mannered around people, it's really showing the Lord a lot of love, because people are His property. People belong to the Lord and He loves them dearly. So when you take good care of people, show them love, do loving things for them, treat them with courtesy and good manners, it's really honoring and respecting the Lord.

You're being loving and kind to the Lord. You're telling the Lord that you love His creation, His people, and you want to be loving to them not only for their sakes, which is a good enough reason, but also out of love for Him.

You can show others and the Lord a lot of love by just being kind and courteous every day. It's amazing how much the little courtesies and good manners affect people. It means a lot to people and they really, really appreciate it when others treat them with love and courtesy. Just ask anyone if they don't feel better when someone says, "Excuse me" if they happen to bump into them, or pass something in front of them, or walk in front of them when they're having a conversation.

You don't have to do big things to be loving, and as a matter of fact, it's often the little things that are so important.

It's so easy to unintentionally hurt people a little or make them feel unloved or unappreciated, when just a little courtesy can do the opposite and make them feel appreciated and loved.

I won't go into a big long list of all the daily courtesies and manners that people should strive to show each other, because that would get pretty long. There are hundreds of things you can do throughout the day, little things that make someone's life more beautiful because of your kindness. It would probably be a good idea to try to come up with all the practical ideas you can of how you can show courtesy to each other and display good manners.

If you follow Jesus' golden rule to "do unto others as you would have them do unto you," then you'll be kind and courteous and won't have any trouble knowing what you're supposed to do. But it takes time to build the habit of doing the loving thing, and in the meantime it's good to have a specific list that will help you get started.

When you pray and ask the Lord to help you be more loving, at the same time ask Him how you can be more loving, and then start working on those practical areas. That's like putting feet to your prayers. As you do your part, He'll put the love in your heart, and soon it will become a loving habit to do those things.

See, you can't have one without the other. You can't just ask the Lord for more love but then not work on it or do the practical things the Lord shows you to do. Neither can you just try to work it up in the flesh, or it won't come across right. It'll just be dead works, a superficial tradition without the spirit. You've got to both ask the Lord for the love you need and do your best to put it into practice!

(ML #3237:38-47)

The Love Game!

(Jesus:) Everybody is in the love game and all Heaven is watching you play, because this is Heaven's favorite sport! I'm the author of the game, and I've designed it to have no limits. This is one game you can never get enough of. The time to play is right now. The time to stop is never. You can go as far in the game as you want. New records are being broken every day. Will you be next?

The love game will always keep your interest! It will always challenge you, stimulate you, satisfy you. It's the best active pastime you can ever take part in. And to top it off, it has the best payoff! It's the highest-paid sport of all time! The prizes you win for playing the game are off the charts, out of the world imagined by earthlings!

The rules of the game are this: The object is to be the most loving person you can—to show love and appreciation to as many people as you can, as often as you can.

The goal of the game is to be on the top of the list of the most loving. You can take as many turns as you like. A turn consists of doing something loving. Reach out and give someone a hug, a kiss, an encouraging word. Do a kind deed, tell someone how much you appreciate them, make a little sacrifice to help someone, lend a listening ear, say a kind word—take your pick from any one of a limitless number of things you can do to brighten someone's life, make their job easier or give them a little love.

Any deed you do to show love and appreciation to those around you gains points in the love game. The more turns you take, the more points you score. As long as you take a turn, you never lose. I have assigned each of you a Heavenly scorekeeper whose job is keeping track of your score. Every time you gain a point, it's recorded on your official love scorecard. You'll always win something for each point, but naturally those with the highest scores win the most prizes! When you arrive up Here, the scores will be displayed for all to see. You'll get to see who was the most loving, who showed others the most appreciation and who won the most prizes. It's all on exhibition up Here!

If you want to get ahead in the game, train with Me. I'm the Champ. If you pay close attention, I'll teach you the winning strategies and techniques that will guarantee your success. The key to getting ahead in the love game is to give it all you've got. Go all the way! Let the game of love occupy your mind and dictate your actions all the time. Remember, your game improves with practice. Never pass—always take that turn to show love and appreciation. Perform great feats of love when you can, but never underestimate the simple moves. You'll be surprised what the simple maneuvers will do. Simple little turns taken regularly and consistently add up the points!

(ML #3254:106-110, 113)

The Importance of Expressing Praise and Appreciation to Others!

(Jesus:) Praise is an actual spiritual power which uplifts, encourages, and strengthens. When you praise Me, you empower Me to work on your behalf. When you praise your brothers and sisters, mates, co-workers, and children, you're strengthening their walls of defense against the Enemy's discouragement, and giving them spiritual strength to keep going.

Praise is such a powerful tool against the attacks of the Enemy! It helps you to count your blessings, to see the positive, to keep your mind on the good things, and it also does wonders for the person who you're encouraging. When you praise Me, it draws us closer together and strengthens our bonds of love. When you praise and appreciate those around you, it also draws you together; it encourages you that you need each other. It helps the other person to know that you love them, need them, and that they're not alone or unnoticed, that their labors are worthwhile.

So learn to be one of My encouragers! Learn to wield the weapon of praise and encouragement against the Enemy's attacks on your brethren. Realize that when you see something good about someone, it's probably Me putting that thought in your heart because I want you to say it! And the more you learn to give what I put in your heart, the more I can give you, and the more effective you'll be in My hand as a tool of encouragement and uplifting.

What is showing appreciation? It's taking the time to either put into words or show by your actions what it is about a person that you like, what it is that makes you want to be around that person, or what that person does or is that makes your Home a happier Home and your life a happier life.

It doesn't have to be big things that you praise or appreciate people for. As a matter of fact, concentrate on the little things, because the little things are the things that often go unnoticed. If you feel you're not observant enough to notice or know what to say, just ask Me! And then when I give you something, say it! Don't be too proud or worry about what the other person will think—just lovingly give My Words.

For example, when your child does something sweet, go out of your way to praise them for it and let them know that you noticed. When your wife serves the food, show your appreciation for whatever I put on your heart, whether it's the nice presentation, the clean kitchen, the delicious sauce, etc. Let your teen know how much you appreciate her help and sacrifice in helping you with the kids.

Everyone needs praise and appreciation, and when you give it freely, you become a channel for My love to flow through to that person. So give! Realize the tremendous power of My Spirit which is in your hands, and give praise and appreciation to those around you.

You should even appreciate the ones outside your home. The waiter, the garbage men, the shop owners—let them know how appreciative you are of their labors. Thank them, and never be too proud to show your love—because it's really My love for them. You are the tool I want to use to encourage them. *(End of message from Jesus.)*

(Show Appreciation! #3254, par.)

How to Become A Better Listener!

(Jesus speaking:) How do I listen to you? Do I listen for a measure of time, and then interrupt you? Do I begin talking before you do, before you've uttered your prayer or heartcry? Only in very rare instances. I'm always here, always available, and I always love to hear from you! The art of listening comes from the attitude of your heart. It's something that can be learned, and I wish to teach you.

When you come and talk to Me, you feel that I understand. How do I understand? First of all, because of My great love for you, I'm always willing to listen to your side of the story and give you the benefit of the doubt. I look beyond the feeble words you speak and I hear your heartcries. I see your motives. You don't have the ability to do this as I do, but I've given you a measure of this gift, and you have but to ask for it, seek it, and be desperate to use it.

This is one of the most important qualities of being a good listener—not only listening to the words that a person speaks, but asking Me to help you hear and understand their heart. Much judgment is misplaced because of people listening only to the words of someone's mouth rather than hearing the words of their heart and understanding.

Some people may be good at speaking, but in their hearts they have the wrong motives. Others may be poor at expressing themselves or are nervous around you, but in their hearts they have committed no sin or wrongdoing. Yet other times something will appear very wrong, but because of the motives of their heart, I would excuse them or grant them mercy. This is why I say that man looks on the outward appearance, but I look upon the heart. You would do well to pray for this gift, and seek to use it at every opportunity.

If a person feels understood, it helps them to communicate better and more freely. So in this, you not only are able to pass better judgment, but you also make the whole process of communication—which is such a sacrifice for many people—much more pleasant and easier to handle. You'll find that people will be more eager to share their hearts and more willing to give the unvarnished truth rather than the polished, one-sided version of the story, if they're treated with understanding of their hearts. They'll know they can speak without fear, for they will not be judged merely by their words, but you will in love look past their words to their hearts, and you will ask Me to show you clearly how you may best understand and help them.

Another gift which enables you to be a good listener is the gift of humility—being truly humble and knowing that there are many, many, many things which you know nothing about, and so to learn, you know that you must listen carefully. This is not something that can be brought about in the flesh. For while body motions and comments from your mouth are indicative of this, they alone cannot change the problem of your heart.

If you're carrying the attitude of being above them, or that you already know or have an opinion about what they're talking about, you'll not be able to listen carefully and absorb what they're saying in the right spirit. Your perception of the conversation will be tainted by your opinion, and in turn the person you're talking with will feel your disinterest or disagreement with what they're saying.

Another key to being a good listener is learning to come before Me with the person you're talking with, and throughout the conversation committing the subjects you discuss, even those you casually chat about, to Me. This will help to avoid many misunderstandings, for as you do this, you will see the other person's point very clearly. Together you will summarize your discussion as you commit it to Me, and you will solidify your conclusions with My blessing. Also, as you stop and take a moment to commit it to Me, I'm able to punch through with more understanding if it was lacking before.

Stopping to commune with the realm of the Spirit and asking for My blessing opens the door for your helpers to check you about anything you said that was not right, or any subject you might not have understood clearly. They are also able to refresh your anointing and give you clarity of thought.

Every one of My precious children needs to feel understood, and a part of that feeling of being understood is what they feel from you. You are only one person, but you affect and influence many others. So it's important for all of My children to come before Me and ask Me to help them do better in this area. Understanding and the skills of good listening convey love—My love for the person, which is unconditional, forever, and perfect in every way.

In order to be better representatives of Me, come before Me and spend time listening to Me. Practice your skills of listening and receiving as you come before Me for little things. The more you listen to Me and the more of My thoughts and Words you receive and absorb, the better you will communicate with those around you, and the better listener you will become. Cultivate the habit, for it's worth it!

(ML #3234:38-52)

Take Time for Affection!

(Jesus:) Affection is something that takes time, just like praising and noticing little things—the colors of a flower, the songs of the birds, or how delicious a meal tastes. It takes going at a slower pace in both body and mind, where you have time for the little things. The little things are really the big things, because that's what makes life so enjoyable and special and gives meaning and depth to living.

Affection is one of the priceless treasures of life; it provides that special touch that lets someone else know that they are special.

It's these little things that are remembered and written down up Here—little smiles, a touch of affection, a kiss, an "I love you"—because they're acts of love, and no act of love is ever lost or forgotten.

Affection is one way that I can manifest My love for others through you—through every stroke on the head, embrace, or squeeze of the hand. Or even pulling out a chair for someone to sit on, fixing them something to drink or eat, perhaps doing something for them they don't even see—like placing some flowers on their desk when they're not there. You may not actually be touching them, but you're showing your affection, which is a tenderness in your heart that is reaching out to them in some way that shows your fondness towards them.

Affection is when your heart expresses your love for another in some physical way that is giving to that person—whether it's saying something sweet and kind, helping them with their work, or hugging and holding them.

Affection is a wonderful gift of love that you should always take the time for and not let it be choked out by the busyness of the affairs of this world, the tares of many cares. Because where affection is, there is love; and where there is love, there am I also, giving and loving through each person to another. As you give affection, so will the love in your heart grow, and it'll grow in the hearts of others, helping them to be loving too.

(ML #3237:6-11)

Honesty: A Key to Successful Relationships

(*Father David, received in prophecy:*) Now I want to give you folks a tip here and hand you the key to success for a fruitful and happy relationship! Okay? I'll call this the guiding principle to any fruitful and successful relationship. Can anybody guess what it is?—A line of good honest communication between you—and that's HONEST in bold capital letters!

If there's anything that is a key asset to a good relationship, good honest communication is it! Honesty and openness is the name of the game I'm talkin' about here! Be honest, be open, share your heart, share your innermost thoughts and feelings. Share everything! Don't hold back!

Be honest about how you feel, what you want, or what you like or don't like. Be honest about your desires, your deepest hopes and longings, your goals, your dreams, and what's on your heart.

Honesty in any relationship is the key! It's the vehicle by which you can open up the treasure chest of your heart to another. Good honest communication is imperative, folks, if you want your relationships to be successful!

Honesty is the key to growth! So if you want your relationship to go anywhere, be honest! Communicate! Talk it out! Talk it up! Just be sure you talk! Communicate and be honest!

How else do you expect to learn about your partner if you don't communicate? If you aren't honest in your communication, how do you expect to either get what you want or make your needs known?

Good honest communication will solve so many problems, and will help avoid others before they even get started! It's a prime asset, a key factor in any good relationship. Honesty is the best policy! Make it your policy in your relationships, and you'll have the greater advantage.

I know it's humbling to be honest sometimes about your deeper, innermost feelings and thoughts, but I think you'll find that if you can just get over that hump, things will run much more smoothly. It might be humbling, but this works together for your good.

So it's well worth it to make the time to open your hearts to each other in honest communication. Because when you do, you're able to get things out in the open and truly share your heart with another. It's like opening the door to your heart and inviting another heart in so that the two hearts can freely interact with each other.

Only when you do this will you grow to truly become one—one heart, one mind, one soul. The first step is open honest communication, no holds barred. It's the key, folks! Honesty is the vehicle by which you can truly get to know each other, understand each other, feel what the other feels, and see what the other sees. When this happens, you're creating more love between you!

It takes practice sometimes to learn to be open and honest with each other. It might take a little time to learn and to build on good honest communication. It also takes prayer and hearing from the Lord. You have to pray before you say, to know what to say, when to say it, and even whether to say it to your mate or someone else. If you folks can just see that if you'll build your relationships from the start on good open and honest communication with one another, this will strengthen you from the very beginning.

You will be building the right foundation, so that when the storms arise that would try to blow your building down, you'll be able to withstand the strong winds and heavy rains. It's because your foundation will have been built with good strong materials, making it strong enough to stand any test and weather any storm of life.

Honesty in a relationship is a prime requisite for success! It's one of the best safeguards you can have! Good honest communication in your relationships can do so many things for you.

It's a release for pent-up emotions and frustrations. It keeps you humble and frees you from the bondage of pride. Isn't it funny that in the world pride is a virtue, but in reality pride is bondage? That's just like Satan—to make it look noble, like something good, while all the while pride is a device to trap people in his snare. Fear and pride—that's what's killing the world today! Men's hearts fail them for fear. And look at the untold problems caused by men's pride—death, destruction and war—all because of the pride of man!

Good honest communication between you can eliminate fear and relieve your relationship from unnecessary pressure. If you'll be open and honest in your relationship, folks, it will bring you freedom! It will bring you joy and happiness!

There are all sorts of benefits! Be wise too, of course. You don't want to say anything that will hurt your partner or offend them, or make them feel bad if they don't love you as much as you love them, or vice versa. You have to watch your words in relationships just like you do at any other time. Pray and let the Lord lead in your love bond!

There's no greater bond than the bond of love. And if you want your bond of love to thrive, to grow, to soar high and to live forever, build your bond on good, honest communication! This is a major asset to any relationship, because without it you can't grow.

If you build your bond on good honest communication, and keep communicating year after year, your love will thrive and grow and soar. But when you stop going forward and making progress in your communication, then you start sliding backwards, and of course your relationship goes downhill too.

People seem to think that they know each other inside-out after a while and stop communicating, or at least slow down a lot, when that's not the case. They don't always know each other that well. Your mate changes and you change; you feel and think differently today than you did yesterday, or than you did last week or last year. But if you stop sharing your minds and hearts because you think you've got everything figured out already, you miss these things.

So naturally after a while mates start thinking that the other one doesn't understand them. And it's true, they don't. Maybe they understood them last week or last month or last year, but they haven't taken the time to understand them today, to communicate deeply. If you do, if you can, then your love can go on and on.

So if you expect your love to grow, then build on good, honest communication between you! Good, honest communication between you will make the difference between a cold, drab, very routine and humdrum existence, and a warm, free, loving and fun relationship!

Honesty brings freedom, folks! Honesty brings joy! If you want to enjoy life and enjoy your relationship, get smart—be honest! Be open and communicate! Share your hearts. Open the door of your heart to another by turning that knob of honesty!

Let the love bond grow strong between you, and enjoy life! That's my tip to you! That's my advice: If there's anything a marriage or a good relationship needs, it's good, open, honest communication! So be honest, and enjoy life! Enjoy each other and enjoy growing together in love! Be honest and communicate—you can't survive without it! Love, Dad.

(ML #3196:23-46)

The Gift of Positiveness

(Jesus:) Try to make a conscious effort to be positive, to speak positive, to think positive. That is one of the greatest assets that you could give your marriage: the gift of a positive spirit—to speak faith when you feel like doubting, to speak love when you feel anger, to speak the truth even when you feel it's all wrong. Just ask

Me first, pray before you say, and I can guide your lips to speak the word that should be spoken, instead of the word that you feel or the word that naturally comes to mind.

This is very important, because when what comes out of your mouth is mostly disparaging—whether about yourself, or about your mate, or about others—it can be extremely dangerous and damaging to your marriage. Every negative word is like an evil seed that takes quick root in the fertile soil of a relationship. Every weed that is sown will one day have to be plucked up, and the longer it is allowed to grow, the harder it is to pluck up. Every single negative comment will have to be picked up again someday, manually and with great and painstaking effort.

How much easier, then, just to never say it! How much easier to nip the weeds in the bud, before the word has a chance to leave your lips! You think it's hard to pray over the words before you say them, to try to say encouraging, cheerful and happy things, but I tell you, it is much harder in the long run not to do this. For all those weeds choke out the happy flowers of love and contentment and romance and passion. The weeds get right to work, and each weed can choke out many flowers.

Is it any wonder that sometimes your garden looks more like an overgrown weed factory? It is all those negative words that you have been sowing in it throughout every day! So do the loving thing—to others, and to yourself, and to your marriage—by praying before you say. Pray to Me for a change of heart, a change of attitude, a change of spirit, that I may bestow upon you a spirit of contentment and thankfulness for everything I send your way, and then pray also that I may guard your tongue from unguarded moments.

This is not to say that there never will be times that you speak negative things, but if you stay close to Me and stay prayerful and on guard in this area, I will help them to become less and less, so that slowly, the flowers will grow again, tall and rich and fragrant, and your marriage and relationship will once again be a sight beautiful and wondrous to behold.

(Eve 6)

The Beauties, Promises, and Rewards of Married Love!

By Maria

My dear ones,

I love you! In the last few years, more and more couples have been getting together. Knowing that this is a big step for many to take, a big responsibility with lots to learn and many challenges and obstacles to be overcome, I've been asking the Lord to give us counsel on marriage that we could share with you.

In the first letter of this series, we will share general counsel on how the Lord views marriage. I think you will be very encouraged to see all the benefits and rewards there are for this commitment, which at times involves sacrifice, but which results in many great blessings as we follow the Lord and put His will and His love first.

In the following prophecy the Lord explains some of the benefits of marriage and how it can help people. What are the reasons for taking this step, which can at times appear to be a big and even frightening one for some in its permanency and obligations?

Why Marriage?

(Jesus:) The benefits of marriage are endless! Marriage multiplies love, and since I am Love, marriage multiplies and magnifies Me in the lives of the people involved and their children, which often result from such love. As those who are married are fruitful and multiply, they fill the world with My children, little messengers of love from Heaven. Marriage keeps people together and provides a good team for raising children. Marriage combats the great plague of loneliness that covers the world today.

The Devil hates marriage because the combining of two hearts is a powerful force for good, so he tries to tear down the traditional family values that used to be instilled in people, preaching that independence means strength and power, when just the opposite is true. Humility, teamworking together, loving another as yourself, committing yourself to another person and to your children—all these are building blocks to a strong bond which helps you to face the problems of life.

I'll list here some very good benefits of marriage. These blessings are like the fruits of My Spirit—love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance. When you receive Me and My Spirit dwells in you, you receive a measure of these things. But the more you abide in Me and let Me abide in you, the more these fruits manifest themselves in you. The more they grow and ripen and come to full fruition.

So it is with the benefits of marriage which follow. As you love each other and love Me with all your heart and soul and might, these benefits grow and blossom. The potential is there in every marriage, but it is up to you to tenderly care for each seed of benefit and nurture it along so it may take full root and grow strong. It is for you to search your heart and sift out any bad attitudes against marriage you may have picked up along the way.

Humility. Humility is love and love is humility, and getting married is the best way to exercise yourself in both of these very important qualities. When you are married to someone, you face them every day and night and must constantly manifest your love and My love to them, in the good times and the bad, when you feel like it and when you don't. They see you as you really are—the many hidden faults and failings which others do not see because they are not so close to you. This keeps you humble before your mate, and them before you. You can learn such things around others, but in married life it is a daily battle for love and humility and a constant learning experience.

Strength. Two are better than one, for if one falls, the other can lift him or her up.

Power. One can chase a thousand, but two can put ten thousand to flight. Merging your life with your mate doesn't double your power—it multiplies it many more times than you realize.

Love. You're better able to love others because your needs for love are filled. You learn more about love than you ever could in a mere friendship.

Security. Loving and being loved brings great security and peace of mind and heart. On that foundation you can accomplish so much more.

Responsibility. Being married teaches you responsibility like nothing else can. You learn how to make decisions together that will affect yourselves, your children, and others for the good.

Unselfishness. Today's world is so selfish, and it's the natural tendency of man to be selfish and look out for oneself. Through marriage you are in a way "forced" to learn to think and act unselfishly, and as a result you learn the benefits of unselfishness more quickly.

Fruitfulness. Combining your life and goals and efforts with another person helps you to reach your objectives more quickly and easily.

Safeguards. When you have no one to care for but yourself, it can be easier to fall into unhealthful physical and spiritual habits. But when you are married, you can be a strength to each other in your weak areas. You care more for yourself, as your life and health affects your mate's, and you care more for your actions, for they also reflect on your mate and your little ones.

Children. Children are a great benefit! And My ideal is that children are born into a loving, secure environment, with both a mother and father to look out for them. Children teach you love, humility, compassion, sacrifice, joy and responsibility like no other gift in this life.

Communication. Communication is important in any kind of relationship, but all the more so in a marriage. Because marriage puts two people in such close proximity to each other, they must communicate to remain close both physically and spiritually. Marriage can help you improve your communication skills, if you are willing to learn. This helps you to draw close to both your mate and others.

Wisdom. Knowing another person's thoughts, feelings, and reactions so intimately, as in a married relationship, teaches you wisdom, as you learn more deeply how your words and actions can affect others.

Responsiveness—sensitivity to others' needs. Marriage can teach you the ability to perceive and understand other people's feelings and needs, and respond positively to them. You learn to be sensitive to their feelings, in a good way.

Sex! "Male and female created He them." I made men and women to be attracted to each other, to fall in love, and to want to live together, to fill each other's sexual needs.

Friendship. Your closest friends are those who know everything about you and love you anyway. Thus your husband or wife can be one of the best friends you have ever had.

Quality of life! I designed men and women to be together, to share their lives. When you follow My will and plan for you, the quality of your life is better. As you do your part, even though it may be hard work, I will supply the fulfillment and satisfaction you earnestly seek.

Joy. "Joy that isn't shared dies young."

Maturity. Marriage is a fast track to maturity, and teaches you many lessons that deepen your character. You and your partner begin to put away the childish things of youth as you learn and grow together.

Enjoyment. When your needs for love, sex and security are filled through marriage, you relax a little more and are able to enjoy life and even help others to enjoy life more.

Usefulness. Marriage can make you more useful to others, for you understand what it is to lay down your life for a mate and children daily. You learn lessons of love, unselfishness, concern and sacrifice that are invaluable both in ministering to your brothers and sisters and to the lost.

Happiness. Being married to someone helps you to tap into the resources of unselfishness, humility, and love, which can all bring more happiness into your life.

Understanding My love. You understand My love for you more than ever, as you experience the unconditional love, respect and devotion of your mate.

Relating to others. It's difficult to understand people unless you walk in their shoes. Once you experience the trials and triumphs, the sacrifices and joys of marriage and raising children with someone, you will find you relate to so many more people.

What Is Most Important For a Happy Marriage?

(Maria:) What are the most important factors for having a happy marriage? What should newlyweds expect, and what should be their standard as they set out in a new married relationship with their loved one?

(Jesus:) When a couple first begin their married life, there are certain things they can do and principles they can keep in mind that will ensure they have a happy marriage in the years to come. A new married couple can set certain criteria within their relationship that will keep it on the right track of My will. If they start off with the right expectations and standard, they will be happy and grow stronger in their loving relationship, secure in their love for each other. But if they start off with the wrong expectations, the wrong ideas and standard, it will weaken their chances of having a happy marriage. That will result in greater difficulties, battles, and trials which could be avoided.

Couples need to start off with the right expectations, realistic expectations of what a happy marriage means. To do this they should look to the Word and what has been said about marriage. They can look at the marriages they see which are happy and fulfilled, loving and fruitful. Through this they will get a realistic picture and idea of a happy marriage and what it involves and doesn't involve.

It's a mistake to model your expectations for a happy marriage after movies which tend to romanticize marriage in an unrealistic way. It's not that marriage isn't romantic, but the type of romance that most married couples experience on a long-term basis is not the same as the movies portray.

For example, if you expect your wife or husband to always be ravished by your presence and ready to romance you with words of passion, or to even always be excited to have you around, then your expectations are not realistic! It is not wise to set your standard for married life according to the movie industry, novels, or soap operas, or to feel that if your mate doesn't live up to some such standard that you have in your mind, they or your marriage are failing.

Even a young marriage that has romance and passion, and where the partners are deeply in love, will also experience human failure, human weaknesses and mistakes. It is wise for couples to be willing to accept this as part of life, and not be discouraged just because the mate they once thought was practically perfect suddenly starts showing signs of being imperfect. People must understand that no matter how much they love each other, their loved one is not perfect and never will be perfect.

A big part of their happiness and continued loving relationship will depend on whether or not they've based their expectations on the Word and set their standard according to it. It will depend on their willingness to be patient, kind, and ready to forgive the mistakes that will be made. It will depend on their faith to believe, their faith to turn to the Word and to Me for the help they will need, and their willingness to work at making it work.

In order to do this, the most important factor in any marriage is Me, My love, and My Spirit. People must start their relationship realizing that I must be in the center from the beginning, as well as throughout their years together. A marriage is happiest when both people start off with the premise that they belong to Me first of all, and that each one is Mine.

I have bought and paid for your life and your love with My Own life, and I desire your love to be set upon Me most of all. You must realize that although I am giving you to each other and I have blessed you with a relationship and marriage for life, in essence you still belong to Me more than to each other. You do not belong to your mate, you belong to Me, and it is My will that should be supreme.

The reason that this is so important for people to remember is because it will help you to keep your priorities straight, which is My will above all else, obeying My voice, and doing My bidding. In doing this, you will be guaranteed happiness, fruitfulness and growth.

I set people in marriages to help each other to do My will, to uphold, to support, to complement each other, and to help each other to be even more fruitful in My service. You join together as one because of your love for one another, which is a gift from My hand, in order to be a more fruitful team for Me, and because you realize that you can do an even better job for Me together than you could apart.

In order to keep Me first and foremost in your lives, you must take the time needed to love Me, to pray together, to hear from Me, to read and study and absorb My Words together. You have to fight to keep Me in the center of your lives, fight for your spiritual connection with Me, fight to hear from Me, fight to bring your questions and problems to Me in prayer and receive My personal direction for you.

Just as you had to fight for your Word time, quiet time, and link with Me when you were single, you have to fight as a couple, as a marriage, to do the same. You are one, and as one you must come to Me together, seek Me together, learn to suck in the spirit together to hear My answers and receive My love and comfort. You do this through reading My Word together, through your prayer and prophecy time together, through your communing with Me and fellowship with Me together, and by making Me a part of your everyday lives.

This might sound easy to do when you're first in love and can see no wrong in your new mate, when you are experiencing the honeymoon stage. But it's very important that you expect your mate to make mistakes, to be human, to get upset sometimes, to have trials, to be hard to understand, to do things you don't like, to even hurt you sometimes, because these things will happen. This is when you must remember that love covers a multitude of sins. You have to fight to love and stay united, to forgive and forget, to come to Me in prayer for the strength and help you need.

It's very important that you be willing to follow the new moves of My Spirit and to implement the New Wine to the best of your ability, because this will keep you challenged and revolting in your married life, and will keep you from getting bored or familiar with each other. You will see as time goes on that My Spirit will be the most important factor in your marriage. Your conviction to keep Me and My Spirit in first place will be very important to your happiness, your growth and progress, and your inspiration as a marriage and as individuals.

So you still need to do many of the same things you did when you were single. You still need to keep your connection strong with Me—even more so, because you are now responsible for helping each other to stay close to Me. You're responsible to be a sample to each other and set the standard high of following Me closely and pointing each other to Me. You still need to pray just the same as when you were single. You can't let your pride or any other reason stand in the way of holding that standard high, of reminding each other to acknowledge Me, to seek Me and to keep Me first.

It may seem like such a simple principle—that of keeping Me in the center of your marriage. But those who fight for that closeness with Me, who fight to uphold My Spirit and follow Me closely, are the happiest. Those who slowly let it slip away, who don't bother to pray and hear from Me together, who put off reading the Word together, who stop fellowshiping with Me together and are too busy for that sweet intimate communion with My Spirit, are the couples who soon start feeling dissatisfied and start having bigger problems.

For you belong to Me and your marriage is in My hands. The more you look to Me, acknowledge Me, and keep Me in first place, the more I will pour into you and through you, and the more I will use you mightily. I will anoint and bless and empower you and prosper the gift that I have given to you, and you will be happy. *(End of message from Jesus.)*

Qualities of a Good Marriage

(Maria:) We asked the Lord to summarize some of the main qualities of a good marriage, and I pray you find the following prophecy a blessing. However, please don't take the summary below as an "end-all," as I hope and pray that you are able to use it as a springboard to further study in the Word for those areas you feel you're weak in.

I pray that as mature adults, each of you will wisely balance what is given below and all the summaries in this present series of Letters with very good counsel in past Letters, as well as the good book summaries in the *Marvellous Marriage* book.

(Jesus:) There are so many qualities that are a necessary part of a good marriage relationship, but they're not unattainable. I didn't make marriage so hard that only the experts could successfully marry, but I ordained it for most people on Earth. I'd like to list, once again, some of the main qualities needed in a good and stable marriage. Don't be discouraged if you find that you don't attain in every area. Just try as hard as you can.

○ **Putting Me first.** It's a simple spiritual law that when your priorities are right—that is, when you're putting your personal time with Me first above all other people and things—everything else falls into place. It's the number one requirement in your marriage, because all the other efforts you might make at improving your marriage will come to naught if you don't have things sorted out in your heart and in your priorities.

I don't just mean putting Me first personally, but also putting Me first as husband and wife, acknowledging Me and allowing Me to be with you during your private times together, as well as acknowledging Me with your family, if you have children.

○ **Putting your mate first, before yourself.** I won't prioritize all the points I'm going to share with you, but this point deserves a close second place, because a marriage can't work unless you are truly preferring the happiness of your husband or wife to your own. Selfishness is one of the leading causes of marriage problems today, because people have the woefully mistaken idea that they got married so that someone could take care of them. As a result, their attitude is, "What have you done for me?" rather than, "What can I do for you?"

○ **Willingness to address problems.** Many of the keys to a good marriage lie in rooting out the subtle negative attitudes you form during your life. While it's a little more difficult to recognize the need for change in attitudes, half of the solution is recognizing the need for a change.—And the other half is seeking Me for My help as you make sincere efforts to change any wrong attitudes.

One of those unhelpful attitudes that is easy to form is that problems will go away if you just ignore them, or the excuse that things will change soon on their own, as soon as circumstances change. But those people with the strongest marriages are those who learn to face their problems head-on and take active steps to unite and overcome them.

○ **Willingness to communicate.** Closely related to the last point, in order to unite and overcome problems, whether in your relationship or with your children, etc., there must be a desire to communicate openly together.

○ **Forgiveness.** Just as I taught you to pray, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us," forgiveness is a key to a good, solid, secure marriage. Never let the sun go down upon your wrath. You can't afford to hold a grudge for more than a day. If you do, it's like punching holes in your own house; soon the chilly winds of hurt and indifference will find their way in.

Make a point to kiss and cuddle when you say goodnight, and apologize for any hurtful words or actions you may have directed at your mate that day. Of course, it's better if you apologize as soon as the offense is committed, but if there isn't time to, then don't miss this important appointment.

○ **Being Supportive.** You and your mate are one, and you should avoid the temptation to gossip or say demeaning words about the other behind their back. It will weaken your relationship in the eyes of others, and even if it doesn't get back to him or her, your own words will defile you.

It's also very important not to say things in front of your mate that would hurt or humiliate him or her, which is sometimes done by contradicting them, belittling them, arguing with them, siding with others against them, interrupting them, finishing their sentences for them, etc. This is very embarrassing and humiliating for the person, as well as for all who hear it taking place. It's very damaging to a marriage. It's bad enough to do this in front of each other in private, but to embarrass your mate by belittling or humiliating them in front of someone else is even worse and shows disrespect, familiarity and lack of love.

With some couples this kind of behavior happens more in public than in private, because one of the mates feels like they have to save face or defend themselves or put down their mate in front of others in order to make themselves look good. Sometimes the motive in correcting their mate in front of others is that they don't want to be embarrassed in having others think that they've married someone who is ignorant or doesn't know the score. Much of it stems from pride.

This is not to say that you cannot disagree with your mate. It is the manner in which you disagree that shows your love or lack of love, your consideration or your pride. The loving and considerate mate will disagree or debate in such a way that they give their loved one the benefit of the doubt and an easy way out if they are wrong, rather than in a self-righteous, humiliating, belittling way that makes the other feel bad.

○ **Teamwork.** Like two oxen pulling a cart, one can't be trying to go fast while the other is going slow, nor can they get anywhere by pulling in different directions. So it is in a marriage. Since your every action can and will affect your mate in a great way, it's important to counsel together before making big decisions, and even smaller decisions that would be better made with your mate. You don't need to discuss every little thing, but wise husbands and wives know how much it means to their mates when they ask their advice or their preference or their opinion, even if it's not absolutely necessary.

○ **Consideration.** I'm referring to what it is that makes you put yourself in your husband or wife's shoes before you say or do something that might hurt them. Since marriage is the most intimate kind of relationship you can have with another human being, where you share your life, your thoughts, your bed, your closet, your children, your bathroom, and sometimes even your clothes, it can be easy to get familiar with each other in your words and actions.

When you're tempted with familiarity, though, just ask yourself, "What if my husband or wife had to leave on a long journey tomorrow? Would they know that I love them, value them, appreciate them, and don't take them for granted?" After being married for a while, you'll learn your mate's preferences and the way they react in many situations, so it can be easy to answer for them or just assume you know what they're going to say or do. But it's a special token of respect when you ask anyway and give them the benefit of expressing their feelings and preferences.

○ **Affection.** Yes, this seems an obvious one, but how many marriages have gone down the drain for lack of affection? Touching and kissing are human manifestations of love that send comforting signals of warmth, love, loyalty, devotion, security and respect. Affection tells your mate you not only love them but you like them. You want to touch them. You even want to be around them when you don't quite agree about something.

Affection has to be give and take. You can't insist on always being the one to initiate affection and then refuse to respond when your mate does. There will be times when you won't be quite in the mood, or the timing will be a little inconvenient, but you can always give a squeeze with your hand or a little kiss and a smile, to reassure your loved one that everything's okay.

Make sure you don't just expect your husband or wife to always give you reassurance through affection without initiating it yourself sometimes, otherwise they may feel you don't love them or care about them, if you only hug when you are hugged.

○ **Equality.** I'm not talking about the women's liberation movement here, and I'm not even talking about the husband and wife doing exactly the same amount of housework. What I'm referring to is an outgoing, helpful concern for your mate to make sure they're not overburdened in their ministry or with the kids. Maybe one of you is better with children, but the other one should also help with them. Maybe one of you is more tidy in the bedroom, but it just means that the other mate needs to make more of an effort to keep tidy also.

You may have different ministries that keep you apart and on different work schedules, so it's important to help bear each other's burdens. It's important to be willing to see the need when your mate is especially tired and still has work to do, and respond even if you've put in a full day's work and now want some time off.

○ **Respect.** Respect for your mate's feelings. Respect for their opinions and decisions. Respect by not interrupting when they're speaking. Respect for their things, caring for them as well as you do your own. Respect for their walk with the Lord. Respect for their emotional needs. Respect for their quiet time. All these forms of respect are important and necessary for a mature relationship.

○ **Admiration.** Yes, admire your partner. Hopefully you didn't marry someone for whom you do not hold a deep admiration of some spiritual strengths or personality traits, or just who they are as a person. Refresh your memory if it's been a while, by thinking about all the wonderful qualities in your partner that you were drawn to and deeply admired. Sharpen your appreciation of the wonderful person whom you have the privilege and the pleasure of sharing your life with.

Sincere admiration for a person does wonders for their whole mentality. To know that there is someone who overlooks your many faults, sees your deep and praiseworthy qualities and loves you for them, gives you hope that life is worth living because somebody loves and admires you. It also gives you incentive to be a better person, worthy of the love and admiration you so appreciate.

○ **Responsiveness.** Nothing can throw a damper on a relationship more than not talking to each other, ignoring each other's questions, or giving the cold shoulder. Since you live so closely together, it's important that you respond lovingly to your partner, whether you are talking in the car, passing in the hallway, spending time with your children, or lying together in bed.

There are always going to be times when one of you needs to be alone for a bit, or perhaps one of you is being a bit moody due to poor health or extreme tiredness. At these times communication is necessary to indicate that you would like to respond better but you just aren't physically or emotionally able at that moment. If those times are the exception rather than the rule, then you won't risk hurting your partner's feelings in this way, and they'll be more likely to understand and give you the space you need.

○ **Reaching out to others.** A good marriage consists of intimate sharing, talking, holding, playing together, loving, nurturing your children together, serving the Lord together, making decisions together, and living your lives together. But even if you are the most compatible couple in the world, get along in every way, and are satisfied with each other's company, in order for your marriage to stay healthy and alive and growing,

you both need to reach out to others. Your husband needs time off with the guys and your wife needs time with another woman or women, having "girl-talk" time.

I designed marriage to fulfill people's needs and provide a secure environment in which to raise children, but I purposely made it so it wasn't completely fulfilling, so each mate would desire the company and friendship of others. This keeps the pot stirred and not stagnant, as the personalities and strengths of others are infused into your own relationship and keep you from becoming too familiar with each other, or even too comfortable.

It helps you to stretch as you learn unselfishness in sharing your beloved mate with others around you. The more you exercise this muscle of reaching out to others, the more benefits you will experience as a result, as you appreciate each other so much more and learn humility and better communication skills with each other.

○ **A sense of humor**, to laugh when you feel like crying. Your lives are so busy, and with so much to do, so many little emergencies in the course of a day, little frustrations and tensions arising, you can save your sanity and your marriage by stimulating your funny bone every once in a while. Try to see the funny side of a difficult situation. When you get in each other's hair, do the humble thing and laugh at your own silly mistakes and idiosyncrasies.

Lighten up on yourself and your mate, and you will find the problems that loomed so large shrinking, as you remind yourself about what's important in life and laugh at what's not. I'm not suggesting you use a sense of humor to put a Band-Aid on problems that require serious communication and prayer together to resolve, but I'm just asking you to lighten up when facing the little annoyances and inconveniences of daily life. They'll always be around you, so learn to laugh them off.

○ **Optimism**. This ties in with a sense of humor, but to take it further, make it a habit to be optimistic when you talk together. You have to be realistic and honest when discussing problems and making decisions, but remember that I am the Answer Man and that if you team up with Me, nothing's impossible. It's sometimes easier to speak faith and optimism around others than it is around your mate, with whom you're familiar, but your efforts are well worth it.

○ **Cleanliness**. This may seem a little too practical for this list, but many a marriage was damaged because after they were married, one of the partners grew lax in their personal grooming or cleanliness habits. It's sad, but some people selfishly conclude that since they are no longer in the "mating game" and they've already landed a mate, they no longer need to put much effort into their personal appearance. Big mistake!

Keeping clean and making an effort to look attractive tells your husband or wife, "I care about the way I look and smell and feel to you. I'm proud to be your wife or husband. I want to look attractive for you." Of course there are times when you'll just dress for comfort, and you don't always have to dress up fancy for a date with your husband or wife, but make sure those occasions don't become too rare. (*End of message from Jesus.*)

How to Build the Ideal Marriage!

(*Maria:*) After reading all of these qualities, you may be wondering if this type of marriage is attainable! You may be encouraged about the things you as a couple are doing right, but also a bit dismayed at the thought of areas where you don't measure up. Well, don't worry! The Lord is only giving this list so that you can picture what things can be like, so that you have a standard to strive for, and so that you can know He will help you reach this standard. Chances are, most of you are already doing many of the things which are included in this list, and if not, you won't find it too hard to start.

But just to help you, the Lord was so sweet to give us another message, in which He explains how to go about having the ideal marriage. Where do you start? Do you just take this list of qualities, and try to do each thing mentioned here?

The key, as the Lord explains below, is that our view of the ideal marriage is much different than His. When we begin to see marriage through His eyes and the way He would like our relationships to be, then we can see that the goals He presents are much easier to attain than we may have thought. So let's see how He further explains the ideal marriage and how He encourages us to reach for that.

(Jesus:) The difference between how man judges and how I judge is found in the simple verse, "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but I look on the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7). It is simple, but it is true. The reason so many people have ideals about marriage that are eccentric when compared with My plans and ways is because they are looking on the outward appearance, the temporal moment, whereas I am looking at eternity, the heart, and the long-term goal—the complete picture.

You might define the ideal marriage one way, but I look at it very differently. The crux of the matter is this: to be in My perfect will is the ideal for you. Yet so often I give you an opportunity which I know will bring you great happiness and fulfillment, as well as lessons learned and rewards of love for eternity. But because it is not what you had in mind, you push it away as a stone instead of bread.

So many times what I would give you has some sacrifice involved, some forsaking of your own plans or ideas, and this is very hard for you to face. Many times you walk away and never even try. Thus, you miss My ideal situation which I have set up for you, because it did not meet with your ideal plans.

This is a big lesson for My children, but one which many will not understand nor see clearly until they reach My Heavenly Kingdom and are able to see things as I saw them. Then they will understand My ways and My workings, and they will be very sorry that they held out for their own ideas and plans rather than taking the way of love and sacrifice which I laid before them as My ideal.

This is not to say that My plans for you bring sadness—not at all! They bring the greatest happiness that can be found on Earth! But they also require a great loving, forsaking, giving of yourself, and dying to your own ideas that Mine might become a reality in your life.

Let us go through some of the circumstances one by one, and I will show you how I see things very differently than you see them. At the same time, you must remember that each person's life is different, and each person has a different part in My overall plan. Often the things that look very easy to one person are very difficult for the person I ask them of. This is not for you to question, but only to follow.

The cross that I give you might seem heavy, while to someone else it might look light or enjoyable. But do not ask why I gave it to you instead of to them—for that is My plan and My will for you, and through it I will work My purpose.

Many people have certain plans about the number of children they would like to have, or when they would like to have them. Often it is much different than My plan for them, but if they can learn to yield to My plan, I will show them the great fruit of obeying My will. Some have many children when they wish for few, or few when they wish for many. Some have children now when they wish them later, or later when they wish them now. Yet others wish for children, but do not have any. That is because I have a special calling for them, which they could not fulfill in the same way if they had children of their own to care for.

Other times people look at the outward appearance of their mate or their prospective mate, wanting them to look a certain way or have certain talents. This often has to do with their pride in some way, or their preconceived ideas of happiness, thinking they have to be with a certain type of person in order to be happy.

Often it would be My will to put them with someone very different, that they might learn to look beyond the outward appearance and love the heart that I love. I know that if they are able to love with My love it will be much longer lasting, much more secure, and bring much greater happiness in the long run.

The world's idea of happiness is success, and in many ways My children have also adopted this frame of mind. It is so sad, for often it is the most humble of My children, doing the most unseen jobs, who are the closest to My heart and the most blessed of Me. To find a jewel that I have loved and cared for these many years, and saved for you, even though unseen or unnoticed by others—this is a true prize!

I would tell you this, dear ones: In your search for a mate, or your search for true happiness in your marriage, seek Me above all! When you seek Me above all, then am I able to live in everything around you, and you see Me and can touch Me and feel Me. I am able to share your life with you and make you happy despite your circumstances. I am able to help you love the unlovely in the eyes of men, or give to those who have great need, though the price of giving is great. I am able to overrule negative effects of your astrological signs and make you compatible.

The highest prerequisite is to be in My will, for then everything else will fall into place! There are no other requirements—save loving Me above all—that will make any difference at all in the long term. All other

things come and go. Looks fade, styles change, fields and ministries change with time, and even your personality and your mate's personality will change with time. But I never change, and if I am the foundation stone and you are building your life upon My will and My choices for you, then you will be secure and fulfilled in your life, in your love, in your marriage, and in your marriage to Me most of all!

The Differences Between Men and Women!

(*Maria:*) As you read the following list of male and female differences, please remember that they're general differences. Not all men are one way, nor are all women the other way. There are vast differences in people's personalities, maturity, experience, etc. So some of you men and women may not agree with the way you're characterized below. And it's true—maybe you're not that way. But the Lord isn't saying that all men are one way and all women are another way, but that certain general characteristics often hold true, much like certain characteristics hold true for those born under various astrological signs. But there are great differences even within these signs.

For the sake of brevity and space, and in order to get this helpful material out to you as quickly as possible, we're not covering every nuance and possible angle, nor every single problem and solution. We trust that you will not only take these messages and tips to heart, but that these prophecies will create a desire in you to delve back into the older Word on these subjects, as well as the *Marvellous Marriage* book and other helpful reference material on relationships and marriage that the Family has put out over the years.

While the list below of differences between men and women may enlighten you and help you understand each other a little better, I certainly hope you won't just let it end there. I hope this list will simply be the first steppingstone to greater understanding and tolerance, as you look to the Word, to the Lord, and to those about you who have experience and wisdom.

(*Jesus:*) Male and female—I created each gender to be different and unique in many ways, so that it could complement, balance, and be a strength to the other. Many resentments arise in the world today because men wish that women thought more like them, and women wish that men responded more like they did.

In this case, one of the keys to love is understanding that I made men and women the way they are. After all, wouldn't a world of only men or only women be very boring? Let's face it, you'd probably feel a great sense of loss if you weren't able to be around the opposite sex and fellowship with them. That's what makes life so interesting—the differences!

Gender differences also help you stretch in the area of tolerance and putting yourself in someone else's shoes. It's a lot easier most of the time to understand the actions of those of your own sex, but to understand the opposite sex takes humility, love, and a desire to relate.

One of the first steps to grasping gender differences is realizing that the differences are many, and that it won't do to just hope that you can go along in your life without attempting to bridge those differences in some way, especially if you're married. If you're a newlywed, for example, it could hurt your feelings deeply to realize that the love of your life still needs time with his or her friends. Or it could frustrate you greatly to experience the dips of emotion or ways of rationalizing that your mate manifests. But if you're prepared in advance for these emotional needs or differences, then you're much more likely to be accommodating and not resentful of your mate.

When reading this list of male and female differences, it will help you to keep in mind that neither gender is wrong for being the way they are—for example, that men are more independent while women are more dependent. It's like the composition of air: On their own, many of the gases that make up air are harmful to your health, but when combined they are life-giving. That's kind of how it is with those differences. If there's a good balance, then the results can be beneficial for all.

This is why it's important that men and women teamwork together in all settings of life, so that they can balance each other out, and as a result make wise, level-headed and loving decisions. If either side is too predominant, the result can sometimes be off-balance and lacking in the ingredients to make things well-rounded.

Following is a list of some of the many general differences between men and women.

- * Men are independent and like to do things on their own. Women are dependent, and crave security.
 - * Men often need time away from their wife, either pursuing other hobbies by themselves or being with other people, while women are more social creatures, and obtain emotional satisfaction from interaction and being able to express their emotions to others, either their husband or other men or women.
 - * Men are more prone to desire quick action, while women are more cautious, desiring to weigh up all the pros, cons, risks and advantages.
 - * Men like to get to the point, while women like to discuss things more fully and explore every in and out of a situation or problem.
 - * Men are more rational; women are more emotional.
 - * Men find most of their fulfillment in their job or vocation, while women find more satisfaction in nurturing a stable home environment for their husband and children.
 - * Men are more tough; women are more tender, physically and emotionally.
 - * Men crave trust, respect and acceptance, while women crave words of love and endearment.
 - * Men like to see their wife's love manifested in physical action (i.e., through sex, food or care of their needs) while women appreciate their husband's love manifested through words and affection and caring deeds.
 - * Men are more impartial in their interaction and affection with others, while women tend to be more partial, saving special affection and attention for their closest friends and loved ones.
 - * Where a man's body goes, his mind follows; where a woman's mind goes, her body follows.
 - * Men are more likely to desire variety in their sex partners, while women can be more content with just one partner who is filling their emotional needs as well.
 - * Men can tend to be quickly interested in other women, yet just as quickly become disinterested. While women don't frequently become interested in other men, when they do, it tends to last longer.
 - * Men often need outlets like fresh air, getting away from the house, or pursuing some hobby or recreation with other men, while women often need emotional outlets like a shoulder to cry on, someone to cuddle for reassurance, and a listening ear.
 - * Men are able to pace themselves easier, while women can tend to get under nervous strain when they feel overworked or emotionally stretched. Though there are differences in personality, I have designed women to be the weaker vessel so that they might need men more and be more dependent upon them. They also often seek Me more desperately, because they are more conscious of their lacks and inability, so in this way they are the stronger vessel.
 - * Men are more simple and direct, while women are more complicated and indirect.
 - * Men like to make love and talk later, though they're often very tired by then; women like to talk first and make love later.
 - * Men like practical gifts [presents] that they can put to good use; women like sentimental and romantic gifts that make them feel special.
 - * Men feel stifled around a possessive, too-emotional partner; women crave the security of being "possessed," wanted, and loved.
 - * When marriage problems arise, men often like to come back to them later in order to be more objective, while women want the reassurance of communicating about and solving such problems right away.
 - * Sexually, men are more sensitive to their overtures being rejected than women are.
 - * When it comes to sex, men like quantity first, then quality; women like quality first, then quantity.
 - * Men eat more; women don't need as much food.
 - * Men tend to consider physical repercussions when making decisions; women consider emotional repercussions more.
 - * Men tend to be "honest sinners," while women's sins are more subtle and difficult to detect.
 - * Men consider physical strength and manliness virtues, while women place more importance on intelligence and maturity.
 - * Men generally take more risks, while women tend to be more cautious and considerate of the safety of themselves and others.
 - * Men need physical challenges to overcome, as a test and proof of their manliness, although they also enjoy mental challenges. Women prefer mental challenges more than physical ones.
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- * Men are more practical; women are more romantic.
- * Men can be less likely to change their mind after they have made a decision, while women can be more open to change since they are less likely to be sure of themselves.
- * Men are sometimes influenced in their decisions by their physical needs or desires, while women are more influenced by family and marriage and emotional needs.
- * Men are more calm and stable; women are more prone to worry.
- * Men are more likely to be involved in relationships (apart from marriage) in which they are not as emotionally involved, while women tend toward only one relationship at a time in which they are fully emotionally involved.
- * Men are more motivated by physical or sexual attraction when it comes to relationships with the opposite sex, while women are more emotionally oriented.

After reading this long list, you may have realized several times that the description of men and women doesn't fit yourself or the people around you. Yes, I made each and every person in the world a unique individual, and there are no two people alike. Just because men and women are generally a certain way does not suggest that they must be that way, and if they're not, then they are strange.

For example, many husbands are the more romantic ones, while their wives are more practical. The purpose for the above list is not to put yourself or your loved one into some sort of mold of "you have to be this way," or to make you prejudge men and women and the way they are. Everyone is different!

But if you do find that the men or the women in your life are difficult to understand, then the above list of differences may apply. They may help you to understand why you've been out of sync with members of the opposite sex. It's like learning to understand how someone from another planet thinks. It's not impossible, it just takes time and love and a sincere desire to understand and accommodate them. Remember, love, humility and prayer solve all problems.

(ML #3194, New Wine version)

Success in Marriage

Quotations from the writings of Father David

To have lasting, genuine love, it must be based upon a more enduring foundation than mere fleshly gratification. It must be an unselfish desire to protect and to help and to make someone else happy.

As my mother used to tell me, don't marry the girl you can live with—marry the girl you can't live without!

Marriage should be as equal as possible, as sharing as possible. You should talk together, pray together, love together, discuss together, and then decide and agree together.

The most important thing in a marriage is for both partners to have faith in God and Jesus Christ. When you have faith, everything is possible!

In marriage you die to self, but you find new life.

Don't forget to thank her; or don't forget to thank him. Gratitude is a great thing in married life—show appreciation!

Don't forget to say "I love you!" Keep speaking words of love. Words sometimes can do more for a woman than anything else, especially if you are speaking with love, tenderness, meaning, and sincerity.

Two of the greatest assets to a good marriage are honesty and a sense of humor!

If you want to learn something about unselfishness, humility, and sharing, just get married!

"Whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Philippians 4:8). That applies to your spouse as well! Try to remind yourself constantly of his or her good qualities—the good things—and try not to think about the bad things.

The most damaging thing that can happen in a marriage is to lose faith in each other, and worst of all faith in God.

Say "I love you" a hundred times a day!

In the building business they say that two men can do three times as much work as one man. God's principle is that two can do ten times as much as one: "One can chase a thousand, but two can put ten thousand to flight!" (Deuteronomy 32:30, paraphrased).

Marriage is more than sex or friendship or a business partnership! It is the most intimate, humbling, loving, and self-sacrificial relationship between human beings in all of life. "No greater love hath any man than this: that a man lay down his life for his friends!" (John 15:13) This is love, real love, true love—the willingness of a husband to sacrifice himself for his wife, the eagerness of a wife to lay down her life for her husband. This is supernatural love, divine love, God's love, more than human.

Marriage is so difficult in today's society. There are countless temptations—not just to cheat on your spouse, but to be selfish, to assert your independence, to insist on your so-called rights over another individual. All of these stem from people's desires to promote themselves, and run counter to the Lord's idea that self-sacrifice is the way to happiness.

Genuinely dying to yourself, keeping yourself and your own needs in second place, thinking of your spouse first—this is the secret to married happiness. You find a new life by leaving your old, lonely life behind. You give up old habits, old preferences, and old ways in favor of the new, in favor of this wonderful person who has now come into your life. In doing so out of love, you find great happiness because the Lord blesses unselfishness; He blesses your sacrificially yielding to another person and seeking their well-being, even above your own. Because you put love first, the Lord will bless you with happiness, and that's the way it works.

(Reflections 98)

The Lord says, "Choose the good and eschew the evil" (1 Peter 3:11). He says, "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things" (Philippians 4:8).—That applies to your mate as well. Try to remind yourself constantly of his or her good qualities, the good things, and try not to think about the bad things.

(GT, Marriage:88)

(The following quotations are also from Father David, received in prophecy.)

"One Wife" Marriage Is...

What is marriage? It's a union, a uniting, becoming one. It's being together, acting together, and doing things together. So looking for ways to do more things unitedly and together when possible would be a good start.

* Marriage is understanding.

* Marriage is support. It's supporting your mates in their ministries, in their endeavors, in their projects, in their battles and trials.

* Marriage is protection.

- * Marriage is sacrifice.
- * Marriage is stepping out and trying new things, even if you think you might not like them.
- * Marriage is being open-minded.
- * Marriage is willingness—being willing to sacrifice. It's eagerness to lay down your life for the ones you love.
- * Marriage is walking a mile in another's shoes. It's compassion.
- * Marriage is fellowship—doing things together, being together.
- * Marriage is companion-ship and friendship.
- * Marriage is listening and understanding.
- * Married love stands through thick and thin, no matter how hot the trials or how hard the test.
- * Marriage is honesty and good communication.
- * Marriage is talking, communicating, praying, discussing, sharing ideas and agreeing together.
- * Marriage is discovery.
- * Marriage is accepting others for what they are.
- * Marriage is humbling.

(ML #3211:109-121, excerpts)

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The most important counsel there could possibly be for how to help your marriage: Pray and get the Lord's advice and instruction, tailor-made for you. It's so easy to give up when things start getting tough, when you hit snags and rocky roads in your life as a couple. But don't give up! You can make it work, because the Lord can help you and do the miracles through you. Keep your eyes on the positive, love one another, and love the Lord most of all, because He is the glue that will bind you together.

Another thing to remember here is that keeping the Lord in first place is the primary key that will help you not to expect too much of your mate. When you realize and recognize that your mate is not *supposed* to be everything and your "all in all," because the *Lord* wants and needs to have that first place; it can help take some of the pressure off. Because as much as you each try to do the right thing in your relationship, no one is perfect. And if that's what you're looking for, then you're going to be disappointed sooner or later.

So the real key to a long and lasting, happy and fruitful relationship is keeping the Lord at number one, and building your relationship with each other around your relationship with Him.

(Eve 27)

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It's unrealistic to expect that a long-term sexual relationship or marriage is going to be like fireworks forever. Relationships change as they mature, and your sexual relationship will undoubtedly change. You won't be "weak in the knees" forever, because love changes as it grows deeper. The emotions may fade, but the love you have for one another will grow stronger if your relationship is centered around the Lord.

Sometimes when you've been together with the same person for a long while, you have to work a little at being loving and romantic, as well as keeping your sex life interesting and fulfilling. It's easy to get familiar as the years go by, but the most successful relationships are those that don't stand still. Spicing up your sex life is a big part of keeping your love fires burning and of course staying close to the Lord and in good communication with Him. Also, loving the Lord intimately is a great way to add an extra boost to any area of your life, including sex.

(Eve 25)

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Your problem is that when trouble comes, you automatically start thinking about divorce, when you should be thinking about how to preserve your marriage. It almost makes me laugh how you react in your panic! It is like when a ship gets caught up in a storm, people are thinking of preserving their lives, but you are jumping off right away as if your ship is sinking! Well, maybe it will come in with broken sails or, should I say, with broken *selves* but you can still say you trusted and refused to give up.

You should do all you possibly can to preserve your marriage. The Enemy is striking hard on unity [in the Family] and within marriages, too. And it is the people we love the most that we argue with the hardest, for some reason.

So when things don't go as smoothly as you would want them to, remind yourself of the practicality of day-to-day life. Toughen yourself to the trials. Go in brokenness of spirit, but for God's sake don't drag your chin. And remember all those wise words from those who have it tough, like single moms. After some time of being alone, you are happy for any company. People buy animals for mere company, to hear somebody bark when they come home. I am sure the Lord will remind you of those instances and remarks you've heard from both married and unmarried about how good marriage is if you are destined to be married at this time.

If it is the Lord's will for two of you to be together, and He confirms it, it is damn silly and it is pride to do otherwise. Remember how good it is for the two of you on your sunny days, and how thankful you are every time you decide to stay together. It's good to remind yourself of this, when you are at your lowest. It will do both of you good.

(Eve 7)

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Marriage is a delight. You put the happiness of your mate before your own because you love them and you want them to be happy. You manifest genuine unselfish sacrificial love every day in some way.

Yes, it is work sometimes. But it's wonderfully rewarding work, truly a labor of love. And things keep getting better if you're willing to work at it, remembering the Lord's formula for true lasting joy: Jesus first, others next, yourself last. With the proper priorities and a lot of love, you too can live "happily ever after!"

(END 32)

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That's the beauty of love and marriage—two hearts that beat as one, two minds with a single thought. But the only way that can happen is with time, through a lot of sharing and caring, and most of all through being willing to open up your heart and reveal what's truly inside of you, which you can only do with the Lord's help. You've got to start slow, but be willing to bare your heart and your deepest thoughts and feelings before those you love, and you'll see the good results almost immediately.

You can also apply this counsel to your greater marriage with those in your Family. It pays to make yourself vulnerable, to open your heart to your brothers and sisters, to share what you are really like inside—what you feel and what makes you tick. How much time have you taken to reach out and get to know that man or woman who lives in your Home, what he or she is really like? One of the keys to unity and closeness is honesty and communicating, and you can do it a little bit every day.

Try to set aside a little time every day for fellowshiping—and by that I don't mean just vain babbling, shooting the breeze and talking about nothing. But take some time to really talk together, to pray together, and hear from the Lord together. These things will draw you closer to one another and bring about that true intimacy of the spirit that He wants of His Bride—one Bride, one body, one spirit.

(Eve 30)

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Looking for a "perfect marriage"?

(Jesus:) It takes a while to get the kinks ironed out in a relationship. Marriage is one of the most humbling things, because the other person knows the real you—they see your ups and your downs, they see your blow-its, and yet they love you just the same. That's what you need to remember when you get frustrated at each other: Remember all the times that you've been a stinker, or you haven't been too pleasant to be around, and yet your mate puts up with you and loves you just the same. That ought to make you love your mate even more, because they put up with you.

A relationship is never going to attain perfection. It's never going to be without hiccups along the way. But a successful marriage is between those who know how to handle these things, learn to communicate, and most of all learn to forget the past, to forget those past incidents, those past times when maybe you were a little hurt. Just turn the page every day on your relationship, and start with a brand new, clean sheet of paper. And if you give your hearts to Me, let Me control your life, then your hearts will beat as one, for they'll be one with Me. And we three, together, can be a good team.

(Eve 3)

Thoughts on Marriage

From various sources

Knit your hearts with an unslipping knot.—*William Shakespeare*

Even if marriages are made in Heaven, man has to be responsible for the maintenance.—*James C. Dobson*

Marriage is an adventure, not an achievement.—*David A. Seamands*

You can bear your own faults, why not a fault in your wife?—*Benjamin Franklin*

Success in marriage is much more than *finding* the right person: It is a matter of *being* the right person.—*Robert Browning (1812-1889)*

It takes years to marry completely two hearts, even of the most loving. A happy wedlock is a long falling in love.—*Theodore Parker*

The Christian is supposed to love his neighbor, and since his wife is his nearest neighbor, she should be his deepest love.—*Martin Luther (1483-1546)*

(Reflections 81)

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