

A Marriage That Produces Fruit



Many topics on the subject of marriage are simply short appeals for couples to respect each other and stop there, but Biblical marriage is based on principles that go far deeper than this, because the Biblical idea of love and respect is very different from the world's understanding. This lesson will be helpful to those who have trouble understanding or accepting the Biblical pattern for marriage.

We tend to give much attention to our families in general, even specifically to our children, but we don't seem to give much attention to the marriage itself. A marriage that receives no attention, is like a garden that if left to itself becomes overgrown with weeds, thus choking out the good plants and rendering the garden fruitless. But if the garden is ever to produce an abundance of good fruit, it must receive continual care and attention from its gardener. And so it is with marriage.

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“This garden analogy is not self-made, but it does have biblical foundations. For example, in the Old Testament, God’s marriage to Israel is likened to a man and his vineyard. In Psalm 128 we read of this garden terminology in reference to marriage and family. ‘How blessed is every one who fears the Lord, who walks in his ways, and when you eat of the fruit of your hands you will be happy and it will be well with you. Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine within your house, your children like olive plants around your table. Behold, for thus shall the man be blessed, who fears the Lord.’ ”

“So with a garden analogy in our minds, I want us to think about marriage. Let us think specifically about the diligent life-long effort that must continually be put forth in order for us to have marriages that will glorify God and will last a lifetime and will bear much fruit.

First, we need to think about the mixture of various types of soil that provide a fertile place for a godly marriage to grow”

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“The ground of a God-honoring marriage, consists of three main types of soil:

First, the soil of Spiritual Unity.

An earthly marriage can never reach its fullest potential to honor and exalt God, without the existence of spiritual unity among the husband and the wife.

II Corinthians 6:14 says ‘do not be bound together with unbelievers, for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness, or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?’ See, throughout Biblical history God has warned His people against spiritual intermarriage. Before entering the promise land Moses revealed the will of God in Dueteronomy 7:3 that those who knew God were not to marry unbelievers from the world around them, And the reason was always made clear. That is, in marriage, darkness usually has more influence than light, not always, but usually, and that was the warning found throughout the Old Testament.

Spiritual unity is an essential part of a marriage that will glorify the Lord.

“However, if it is too late for you, so to speak, if you have already married an unbeliever, then let me say to you, that by the grace of God it is not too late for you. It is not too late for you to live for Christ in a way that is committed, that is godly, that maintains your lifelong commitment to marriage.

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Secondly, we need to cultivate the soil of Gender Role Distinction.

For the marriage garden to grow to a state of blessed fruitfulness, both husband and wife need to understand and live out their God-ordained role in the home. God designed the husband to be the spiritual leader, the lover, the provider, and the wife is designed to be his companion and helper, or his completer.

“Today’s society is a mass of confusion. It is a mass of confusion concerning the roles of both husband and wife. Too many husbands are content to let their wives lead the family, and to be co-providers alongside of them.

Too many wives have swallowed the devil’s lie that they will find true fulfillment in taking charge of marriage, taking charge of the family, and by pouring themselves into a career outside the home. This confusion of gender roles drains vital nutrients from the soil of a godly, healthy, marriage.

“Biblical gender-role distinction also provides an illustration of the order and the authority that has always existed in the Trinity. This is something that have been talked about over and over again. The reason you cannot eliminate gender role

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distinction, the reason why you cannot excuse it as a cultural thing is because it is rooted in the very nature of God and the relationships of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. God is a God of order and He is a God of authority.

Thirdly, there is the soil of Lifelong Commitment.

The garden of marriage requires this, which is under massive assault today.

Jewelry stores in large metropolitan cities are now happy to rent out wedding rings instead of selling them. The rings might as well be spray-painted since the long-held image of gold being something that lasts is no longer in style. Instead of signing marriage licenses, couples are entering into marriage contracts which keeps everything separate and some even have a contract end date----just in case it doesn't work!! The traditional wedding vows 'til death do us part' are based on biblical teaching and the words of Jesus still stand true today: 'What God has joined together let no man separate.'

The word 'divorce' should never be allowed in your marriage. It should never be allowed in your home. We should vow to our spouse that no matter how difficult times get, you will not throw that word out as a threat, or as a way to manipulate each other.

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If you have used divorce, or the threat of divorce as a means of manipulation, you need to repent of that immediately.

You need to make a solemn vow that you will not do that ever, ever again, that God has joined you together, and you will not break that apart.

God has intended marriage to be for life. Do not think that if things go bad you can simply get out and find someone who fits you better. You'll take yourself, who's almost always at least half of the problem, into your next relationship and continue the downward spiral.

“In this soil we must then continually plant Four Kinds of Seed.”

First, the seed of Companionship

When God first created Eve for Adam, she was made to be a helper suitable for him. The words ‘helper and suitable’ implies that she was made to fit him.

She's a ‘fit’ for him, that is Eve complemented Adam by providing strength for his weaknesses. She was made to be his completer, to be his companion, not his slave.

She was made from his side, and not from his head so that he could boss her

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around, nor from his foot so that he could trample upon her. But from his side, that she would be a side-by-side companion. If you read the Song of Solomon you will find this companionship exalted. Though the book is dedicated to exalting the beauty of the physical relationship within marriage, there is a striking display of tender companionship that is found throughout the book. Plant the seed of companionship.

“Secondly, plant the seed of Biblical Love.

This is self-giving, Christ-like love. This is the kind of love that is necessary for a marriage Garden to be fruitful. Ephesians 5:25 is clear: ‘husbands love your wives, just as Christ so loved the church, and gave Himself up for her.

That command is found again in Colossians chapter 3. But though the command to love is given twice to the husband, the wife is also expected to love her husband.

Titus teaches that the older women in the church are to teach the younger wives to love their husbands. Biblical love, self-giving love, self-sacrificing love, love that looks to the interests of the other person, not to the interests of self.

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“Thirdly, we need to plant the seed of Affectionate Loyalty

And here I offer to you Proverbs chapter five. Repeatedly in chapters five, six and seven, we find warnings against the adulterous woman, against the harlot, against the one who dresses herself or undresses herself, you might say in today’s immodest society, in order to attract men.

Solomon said one of the most affective remedies against the lures of the adulterous, is for a husband to delight in his wife. To give attention to his wife, affectionate loyalty to his wife, which builds a fence, or we might say, a brick wall, hopefully, against adultery.

“And then fourthly, the seed of Others-Esteem.

A marriage garden flourishes when both husband and wife obey the exhortation of Philippians 2:3 to, ‘do nothing from emptiness or selfish conceit, but with humility of mind, regard one another as more important than yourselves.’

That’s what I mean by ‘other’s esteem,’ not self-esteem, but others esteem---esteeming the other as being more important than self. If you’ve got a husband or

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a who is constantly esteeming his wife as being more important than himself, and a wife who is constantly esteeming the other more than him or herself, you will have a strong marriage.

“Romans 12:10 commands us to give preference to one another in honor. This literally means to outdo each other in honor and respect. So applying that to a marriage, instead of tearing one another down, spouse will spend their time building one another up.

So to recap and keeping on the theme, **A Marriage That Produces Fruit** (good fruit), we have talked about the mixture of various types of soil that provide a fertile place for a godly marriage to grow including:

The soil of Spiritual Unity: The need for us to be equally yoked.

The soil of Gender Role Distinction: The need for us to stay in line with God’s order for a husband and a wife regarding our roles in marriage.

We also talked about the soil of Lifelong Commitment: Warning to not get in the way of what God has anointed. The traditional wedding vows ‘til death do us part’ are based on biblical teaching and the words of Jesus still stand true today: “What God has joined together let no man separate.”

Divorce is out of control!!! We are moving away from a society where parents had many children, to children having many parents (multiple stepdads and stepmoms, play daddy and play mama, two men acting like mama and daddy and two women doing the same, etc. etc.).

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Then we turned our attention to the type of seeds that must be planted into these soils in order to have A Marriage That Produces Good Fruit. These seeds included:

First, the seed of Companionship: We talked about how Eve was a ‘fit’ for Adam, how she complemented Adam by providing strength in his weaknesses. She was made to be his completer, to be his companion. We must remember, that our spouses are not just our helpers....they are our companions.

Secondly, the seed of Biblical Love: This is self-giving, Christ-like love. It was put best when Paul said, “husbands love your wives, just as Christ so loved the church, and gave Himself up for her.” We are to love one another so much, that we will be willing to give them our very best every time.

Thirdly, we talked about the need to plant the seed of Affectionate Loyalty: One of the most affective remedies against the lures of the adulterous, Solomon says, is for a husband to delight in his wife. To give attention to his wife, affectionate loyalty to his wife, which builds a fence, or we might say, a brick wall, hopefully, against adultery

And last, we talked about the seed of Others-Esteem: In other words, Instead of tearing one another down, build each other up. Give compliments, look for the good, say the nice things.....simply put, “do unto others, as you would have them do unto you.”

Now we conclude with a discussion about some various weeds that can grow in our garden if we are not careful

“In the garden of marriage there a variety of counterfeit plants or weeds that must to be spotted and pulled.

Some of these weeds may even look prettier than the good plants, but it’s a counterfeit. Weeds steals nutrients and light from the good plants. And again, these weeds must be spotted and they must be pulled. **There is a pine tree behind my house with beautiful orange flowers on a vine going from the ground all the way to the top of the tree. My wife noticed them just the other**

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day and said “ Oooo, that is so pretty---they look much prettier than the old, tall, linky pine tree. But they are poisonous and I was told that if I did not spray something on them, they would eventually smother the tree and the tree will die. So let’s look at a some of these nasty weeds. Keep in mind that there are many, we will focus on only five for the sake of time.

First, the Weed of Neglect

I think this is the most subtle weed of all. It doesn’t take work to have a garden that is filled with weeds. Right? It doesn’t take any work at all. All you have to do is plant your seeds, and go in your house, and come back a week later, two weeks later, or three weeks later and then wonder how you’re even going to walk through it.

The weed of neglect is the source of all other weeds, a failure to constantly cultivate the previously mentioned soils, or to plant the essential seeds of a godly marriage will allow other nastier weeds to take over your garden.

In other words, the weed of neglect overshadows all the other weeds, because if the weed of neglect can be successful, then you won’t notice the other things. Or, when they show up they won’t look quite as bad as they really are.

Neglect is not always easy to spot; neglect is one of those low-creeping weeds, that creeps along the ground and wraps itself around the other plants, the good plants. Like it says in Song of Solomon 2:15 it is often the ‘little foxes’ that are ruining the vineyards.” **It is the little things that ruin our marriages.**

Secondly, the Weed of Contractual Thinking.

What do I mean by that? Well, our society views marriage primarily as a contract between two people. Have you heard of it spoken that way? It’s quite common. In fact, it’s the prevailing view today. So if one party breaks the contract, the other party is free to do the same.

In God’s eyes, marriage was never designed as a contract, but a covenant, a life-long covenant.

That’s why Proverbs 2:17 speaks of the adulterous wife as one who leaves the companion of her youth, and forgets the covenant of her God. Not a simple

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contract she's breaking here, she's breaking a covenant made in the very presence of God, and actually made with God. When we say, "I do", we are make a covenant between three---Husband, Wife, and God.

So be wary of adopting worldly thinking. Marriage is not a contract, but a covenant between three persons: the husband, the wife, and God."

Thirdly, the Weed of Unresolved Anger

Have you ever wondered to yourself, "What is wrong with him!!" This ugly weed is destroying marriages left and right. Ephesians 4:26 commands us, 'be angry and yet do not sin, do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity.'

Many married couples, through years of unresolved conflict, have in the language of Paul here in Ephesians 4, they have set up a guest-room in their house for the devil, and they have decorated it especially for his frequent visits. And if you are not careful, your invited guest will make your marriage room his domicile.

That's what you do when you tolerate unresolved anger, and conflict in your marriage. Paul says you are giving the devil an opportunity!

You are setting up a spare room in your house and putting 'the Devil's Room' on the door!

And he now has a foothold in your life, he has a foothold in your marriage, he has a foothold in your family, he has his space, he has claimed it as his own.

If that's the case in your marriage, you need to #1 repent of unresolved anger, and the unforgiving spirit that usually accompanies it, #2 begin working through your conflicts biblically, so that you do not have this nasty weed that ends up choking your marriage to death.

Forth, Watch out for the Weed of Selfishness

The selfish person thinks that the world exists to serve him, to meet his needs. When this attitude exists in a marriage, it damages the fruitfulness of the marriage garden, because then the husband starts to think that the wife exists to meet his

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needs, and the wife thinks the husband exists to meet her needs, and they fail to understand that they both exist to glorify God.

The weed of selfishness must be yanked and replaced by the good plant of servanthood.

I think of John 13, Jesus washing His disciple's feet. No selfishness evident there except in the disciples hearts. They lay around waiting for someone else to serve them, they didn't take the initiative to get up and serve, Jesus did. He laid aside His own interests.

When was the last time, you without begging or pleading took the initiative to do something that would serve your husband or your wife?

Last, the Weed of Pride

The book of Proverbs is almost redundant in its assertions of pride being at the root of conflict and strife. If there's conflict in your marriage then there's pride in your marriage, there's pride in your heart.

Proverbs 11:2 'when pride comes then comes dishonor.'

Why do we dishonor one another? We dishonor one another because of pride.

The reason why pride is so damaging to a marriage, is because the self-exalting mindset is anti-Christian. It is the opposite of what Christ would do. Christ humbled Himself and served. But pride places us in a position of self-exaltation, it also places us in a position of becoming a practical enemy of God, whereby God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.

So if we are proud, we are not only in conflict with our spouse, but we are in conflict with God.

Being proud will keep you from saying, "I'm sorry" when you know you were in the wrong. Instead of making excuses for our behavior for our sin, we should be quick to repent and ask for forgiveness from the person we wronged and from God. One reason why David was called a man after God's heart, was because of his attitude. David was not perfect, but he was quick to repent of his sins!!

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Being proud will keep you from meeting the need (s) of your spouse when you know that you are the only legitimate person to meet that need.

Remember: When you know better, Do better.

Bro. and Sis. Nelson