

# OBTAINING AND RETAINING A SUCCESSFUL MARRIAGE

By  
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## DISCLAIMER

I am not a professional marriage counselor. Therefore, any questions about marital problems that are not answered to your satisfaction by this essay should be taken to a professional (preferably a Christian) counselor. I can assure you that a successful marriage is priceless.

## PREFACE

My classroom education in religious matters was obtained at Trinity Bible Institute, Lubbock, Texas. Also, I received first-hand ministry training in my roles as lay pastor, associate pastor, teacher, and director of in-home Bible study groups. I learned about the various aspects of marriage by personal experience, attending seminars, in-depth study of the Bible, by researching and studying commentaries and other pertinent material, and from the testimonies of others.

If you are not a Christian, I strongly urge you to become one because the power of the Holy Spirit is necessary if you are to gain the maximum benefit from the suggestions given in this document.

## Prelude to Marriage Discussion

If there is ever an area of life that is filled with battles, it is the marital arena: emotional battles, physical battles, battles of conscience, and so forth. It is an area in which victory “in Jesus” is so often desperately needed. Certainly a successful marriage is essential to obtaining and living a victorious Christian life.

I am not a professional marriage counselor, but during my fifty-nine years of marriage I learned first-hand much about the good and the not-so-good things about marriage. Also I observed and counseled many people during my years in Christian ministry, and I have researched the subject of marriage rather extensively. In this document I share what I have learned and observed with the hope and prayer that it will result in the right choice of a mate, and will save marriages and make them truly enjoyable.

Marriage is the oldest institution, having been established by God in the beginning. “For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24, NIV)

I realize much in this document might be considered “Pollyannaish;” but I humbly believe it was my duty to include in my discussions as much material as I thought would benefit the reader.

In reading through this document you might be inclined to think, “No one can follow all of these suggestions.” That may be true for some, but I beseech you to strive to implement and live by all the suggestions because the more of them you follow, the greater the chances that your marriage will survive. But it is not my desire that your marriage just “survive,” but that it will be a happy and fulfilling one. I firmly believe that Christian couples who are living a Spirit-lead life, will be able to follow all the suggestions put forth in this document in which I discuss four topics:

- Choosing a spouse
- Making a marriage work
- Considering divorce?
- Remarriage

## CHOOSING A SPOUSE

Unfortunately, too many people get married without having had sufficient preparation for marriage. Consequently about one-half of marriages end in divorce, and the rates of divorces for Christians is about the same as it is for non-Christians. (A personal admonition: NEVER consider divorce as an option!)

Following are some questions and suggestions for anyone who is contemplating marriage. A sincere study of them, and the application of them, should result in a marriage with very high odds of lasting. (Answer all questions honestly, or any benefits that might be derived from reading this document will be negated.)

The first thing people should do when they get serious about getting married, is to ask themselves the question: “Will we be equally yoked?” In 2 Corinthians 6:14 (TLB) it says: “Don’t be teamed with those who do not love the Lord, for what do the people of God have in common with the people of sin? How can light live with darkness?”

If you have any reservations about being teamed with the person “as is,” don’t get married until you have resolved your differences. Ideally, your prospective spouse should become your “best friend” before your marriage. Doing so will enhance the probability of a lasting, loving marriage.

During my pastoral career I had a couple come to me with the question, “Do you think it would be all right if we get married?” I asked each of them this question: “Are you willing to live with this person as is?” Surprisingly enough they both answered, “No.” I told them they should not get married with the expectation that the spouse will change for the better after marriage.

They then said they wanted to pray about the matter and went back into another room at the rear of our home. A while later they came back to the living room and said they believed the Lord had told them it would be okay for them to marry.

Hoping that further counseling would cause them to change their minds, I suggested they consult the pastor of the church they were attending. They did, and he told them essentially just what I had told them.

But they were determined. The young man bought his fiancé an expensive ring, and shortly thereafter they literally had a “Country Club” wedding. Due to the actions of the bride on the wedding night, the marriage was never consummated, and shortly thereafter it was annulled.

Much of the time when people get to the point of seriously considering marriage, they are so starry-eyed that their brains do not function as well as they should. (As the adage says: “Love is blind.”)

But you and your prospective spouse should make a very determined effort to calmly and truthfully discuss your various viewpoints as to what you will expect from each other in your marriage. Below are some questions that should help you in determining how equally yoked you and your prospective spouse are at this

time. If you are not “equally” yoked now, the odds are you will certainly not get equally yoked after you get married.

Therefore, you and your prospective spouse should carefully and honestly consider each and every question because even trivial differences can grow into disastrous proportions. Anytime you disagree on a point, you should definitely resolve it before you get married. Doing so will certainly improve the odds that your marriage will be a success. Other suggestions that can help in making marriage a great and lasting experience will be given subsequently.

### Religious Considerations:

- Are you both believers in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior?
- Do you both believe marriage should be “till death do us part”? Taking a vow is serious business: Numbers 30:2 (NIV): “When a man makes a vow to the LORD or takes an oath to obligate himself by a pledge, he must not break his word but must do everything he said.”
- Do you agree on the denomination and church you will attend?
- What do you anticipate your respective roles in the church will be?
- Do you agree on what will be your monetary support for the church?
- Do you agree on the frequency of your church attendance?
- Wife-to-be, will you be willing to submit to your husband? Husband-to-be, will you love your wife as Christ loved the church?

### Money:

- Do both of you plan to be employed outside the home?
- Can you agree on your respective goals/desires/careers?
- What will you do with your earnings?
- Will it be share and share alike (money, responsibilities, etc)?
- Will you agree on the need/desire to purchase various items? (e.g., house, car, investments, etc.)
- Will you agree on a budget and stick to it? (Free forms are available on the Internet)
- Do you have strategies for adequate retirement funds?

[A word of warning: Don't use credit cards unless you pay off the balance EVERY month. The most common reason for filing bankruptcy is high debt/misuse of credit cards1.]

### Sex

- Was your initial relationship based on “storge” (friendship) love or on “eros” (sensual) love? Storge love is definitely the preferred initial love.

- A word of caution: heavy petting lowers the bars of wisdom and restraint and lets in sensual thoughts which can lead to pre-marital intercourse. You should each take a vow to remain chaste until married. If you make and keep such a vow you will never regret it. On the other hand, if for any reason you “surrender” your chastity, you will always regret it.
- Will each of you make an honorable, unselfish effort to meet the sexual needs of your spouse?
- Will you feel free to honestly discuss sexual issues with your spouse?
- Will you agree to never use sex to manipulate your spouse?

#### Duties:

- Can you agree to work together on household and yard chores?
- Will you be in harmony about having children and caring for them?
- Will such things as shopping for groceries and other items be a joint or individual effort?

#### Social Activities:

- Do you like each other’s friends?
- Do you agree on the frequency of having company, or going visiting?
- When you invite guests, will you share responsibilities for seeing they have a good time?

#### Entertainment:

- Will you enjoy together the same forms of entertainment, such as fishing, bowling, golf, dancing, attending sport events, plays and musicals, watching TV, traveling, and going out to movies?
- Will you enjoy playing games with each other and family and friends?

#### Personal and Family Interactions:

- Will you maintain your commitments (wedding vows) to your spouse?
- Will you always keep open the lines of communication with your spouse?
- Do you agree on abstinence and/or alcohol usage?
- Is there now, or has there ever been, alcoholism/drug abuse/sexual abuse/etc. in either spouse’s family?
- Are there genetic problems in either spouse that may adversely affect your offspring?
- Are there any current or potential health issues that need to be addressed?
- Will you both be covered by health insurance?

- Can you agree to never go to sleep at night with a problem or argument unresolved?
- Can you agree to take “time-outs” when it is apparent that tempers are rising?
- Can you agree to stop for prayer as a way to defuse tense moments?
- Will you attempt to never let a minor difference or affront grow into a real problem?
- Will you be willing to admit your mistakes and seek forgiveness for them?
- Will you be willing, with God’s help, to always truly forgive your spouse for any and all infractions? (70 X 7)
- Will you be able to graciously allow your spouse to choose his or her friends?
- Can you agree on frequency and length of phone conversations?
- Can you accept your in-laws as they are? (Remember you will be “marrying” the family of your spouse.)
- Can you agree on family-visiting arrangements and frequencies?
- Will you agree on vacation times and places?
- Will you be willing to compromise (in love) on issues as long as they are not contrary to God’s WORD?

If you are unable to come to an agreement on any question issue, seek Christian counseling before you set the wedding date. And here is a must: be completely honest with the counselor. I know a couple that got counseling that was required by the minister who was going to conduct the wedding ceremony. Unfortunately, they were not honest in their replies to his questions. I later learned they answered the counselor with answers they believed he wanted to hear. The marriage lasted about two years.

Never make the mistake of believing that your spouse will change after the wedding, because the odds are overwhelming that there will be no improvement. And generally speaking, the more you try to change the person the more resistance and rebellion you will encounter. [Please note: It is a well-known fact that the true nature of a person comes out after the honeymoon is over, so be prepared, in love, to deal with the negative changes in you spouse.]

Don’t cohabit before marriage with the idea that doing so will increase the odds of a successful marriage. Statistics indicate that doing so actually increases the odds the marriage will fail. As mentioned previously, you and your spouse-to-be should refrain from sexual relations until after your wedding; you will never regret that you waited. (Tragically, polls have indicated that a large percentage of youths engage in sex before they finish high school, and that the majority of couples anticipating marriage do not remain chaste until after they are married.) Earnestly petition the Lord to help you remain virgins until after marriage.

## MAKING A MARRIAGE WORK

[At this point in your reading, I would recommend that you married couples go back and reread the “Choosing a Spouse” section. Pretend you are just contemplating marriage and then go through the questions together; please be truthful in your answers. Taking this “test” should reveal any areas in your marriage that you need to work on. I suggest you write down any questions on which you disagree, and then agree to resolve them as soon as possible. Then please come back to this section and continue with your reading.]

One very important element of a marriage is husband/wife relationships. These relationships include the much debated noun “submission” and the verb “love.” Unfortunately the word “submission” is too often taken by the husband to mean the wife has to do whatever he commands.

Jesus made it clear that He was submitted to the Father: John 5:19 (NIV): “Jesus gave them this answer: ‘I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.’”

Keep in mind that while Jesus was submitted to the Father in his earthly role, the Father provided all He needed and kept Him from any harm until it was time for Him to make the sacrifice for all mankind: death on the cross, bearing the sins of the world.

Therefore, the husband should assume the obligation to provide for his wife and to protect her as long as she is submitted to him. If the wife chooses to step out from under her husband’s umbrella of protection, then she is responsible for whatever may happen to her.

At this point I want to make it clear that the following discussion about wives submitting to their husbands, and about husband loving their wives, is based on the premise that both the husband and wife are Christians and are being led in their marriage by the Holy Spirit. If that is not the case then the following discussion (as well as others) will probably be of little value. (I want to reemphasize that if you want to truly live a victorious Christian life, you naturally have to be a Christian. If you as a reader are not a Christian being led by the Holy Spirit, then I would encourage you to become one.)

Following are scriptures pertinent to a wife’s submission and a husband’s love.

- “Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy...” (Ephesians 5:22-26 NIV).

- “Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them” (Colossians 3:18-19 NIV).
- “Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives” (1 Peter 3:1-2 NIV).
- “Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers” (1 Peter 3:7 NIV).

The above scriptures make it clear that a husband is to love his wife with agape love—a Godly, caring, unselfish, and unconditional love. Therefore, loving with agape love means the husband will love his wife with an unconditional love and will do all within his power to meet all her needs, including food, clothing, shelter, safety, emotional and spiritual wellbeing, and the continual assurance that he will love her unconditionally until “death do us part.”

When a wife is submitted to her husband it does not mean that he’s superior to her in any way; he definitely is not. Also, the wife’s being submitted to the husband does not mean there will not be disagreements. However, it does mean that when disagreements do happen, they should be settled without any residual anger or unforgiveness. In other words the couple should not let the sun go down on their anger.

““In your anger do not sin’: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold” (Ephesians 4:26-27 NIV). But in cases of a stalemate, the husband has the responsibility of making the final “decision.”

I prefer to think of a successful marriage as a “mutual admiration society.” That is, the husband and wife are working together in harmony, each striving to make their mate feel happy, secure, fulfilled, and loved. To do this the spouses must be led by the Holy Spirit.

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control Against such things there is no law” (Galatians 5:22-23 NIV). And if they are being led by the Holy Spirit, that marriage will never be in jeopardy!

To complete this discussion on husband/wife relationships, I would like to make some suggestions pertinent to husband/wife responsibilities. Again, these suggestions are based on the assumption that the husband and wife are in right standing with the Lord and are allowing the Holy Spirit to direct their lives. I believe the suggestions are biblical and should be “fair” to both husband and wife.



## Responsibilities

- The husband has the responsibility of treating his wife according to biblical principles. That is, he should love her unconditionally, and he should never command her to do anything that is morally or spiritually wrong.
- The husband should be responsible for making the final decision on any matter of significance to his wife, his children, or himself, but only after he has consulted his wife.
- The wife should make the decisions pertaining to the running of the household, but only after she has conferred with her husband.
- The husband and wife should share equally the responsibility of raising the children, but the husband should be responsible for the “last word” in cases of disagreement.
- For decisions in other matters, the husband and wife should share the responsibilities. However, in cases where they cannot agree, it is the husband’s responsibility to make the final decision or seek outside counseling about the matter under consideration.

“The man should give his wife all that is her right as a married woman, and the wife should do the same for her husband: for a girl who marries no longer has full right to her own body, for her husband then has his rights to it, too; and in the same way the husband no longer has full right to his own body, for it belongs also to his wife. So do not refuse these rights to each other. The only exception to this rule would be the agreement of both husband and wife to refrain from the rights of marriage for a limited time, so that they can give themselves more completely to prayer. Afterwards, they should come together again so that Satan won’t be able to tempt them because of their lack of self-control” (1 Corinthians 7:3-5 TLB).

I speculate that Paul was trying to say delicately (and in a sort of veiled manner) that the husbands and wives should honor the sexual needs of their spouses but without coercion or manipulation and with mutual consent.

Problems concerning sex are leading causes for divorce. Most men are ready for sex without any foreplay. On the other hand, most women desire loving foreplay before sex so the experience will be an act of love, not animal lust.

Therefore, I would make the suggestion that the spouses openly and honestly tell their mate what they would like for them to do to make their sex life fulfilling. If they cannot reach an agreement in the matter, they should seek a Christian counselor, or obtain a book written on marital sex from a Christian perspective. Marriage is far too important and too sacred to allow problems in the realm of sex to destroy it.

In addition to the guidelines given above for “submission” and “sex,” there are other biblically-based guidelines for certain things that spouses should do and should not do—biblical because they are based upon agape love (Godly, caring, unselfish, and unconditional) and the Golden Rule of Christ: “Do to others as you would have them do to you” (Luke 6:31 NIV).

Husbands and wives, you *should not do* the following things to your *spouse*:

- Criticize them in any manner
- Take them for granted
- Try to dominate or control them
- Embarrass them
- Neglect them
- Belittle them
- Use sex to manipulate your spouse
- Ignore them for any reason

Husbands and wives, you *should do* the following things for your *spouse*:

- Make them feel needed, wanted and loved
- Meet their needs in the bedroom setting
- Forgive them 70 times 7, or more
- Resolve all problems before going to sleep at night
- Compliment them on their appearance when warranted
- Accept their friends
- Spend a lot of quality time together
- Communicate your desires, needs, problems, etc. to each other.
- Dine out with them on a regular basis
- Work with them on various projects; it will bring you closer together
- Have some out-of-the house “fun time” with them on a regular basis
- Turn off the TV and computer and play games with them, or just talk
- Practice good hygiene and good manners at all times
- Have vocal interaction during all meals, and without having the TV on

If your spouse does anything that displeases you, tell them RIGHT THEN. Don't wait until later as that is unfair to them. I know from fifty-nine years of marriage that waiting a while before bringing up the displeasing matter can result in a real disaster as well as being unhealthy. And the longer you wait to bring up the subject, the more disastrous the results will be.

And last but by no means least, give them hugs regularly. Scientific research has shown that hugs are good for your health. Personally, I don't believe you can give or receive too many of them! And research has shown that a person needs eight hugs a day for "maintenance" and twelve hugs a day for "growth." (I personally believe that a kiss with the hug will amplify the benefits of the hug.)

Husbands, these are *additional, special things you should do* for your wife:

- Show her that (next to the Lord) she has first place in your life
- See to it that she does not want for anything she needs
- Build her self-worth by giving her your love, admiration, trust, and respect
- Pray with her daily and study the Bible with her
- Take her shopping when she asks you to
- Bring her gifts and flowers on both special and non-special occasions
- Provide her with an allowance from your income to spend as she chooses
- Tell her you are proud to be her husband
- Remember that lovemaking begins "in the kitchen," not in the bedroom
- And be sure it is truly "making love" and not just fulfilling a sexual lust
- Take your wife on a "second" honeymoon once a year if at all possible

Wives, these are *additional, special things you should do* for your husband:

- Show that you consider him to be the "head of the household"
- Show that your major desire is to be the perfect wife
- Continually let him know you really love and respect him
- Before going out in public, dress modestly: no cleavage, no short skirts
- Let him know you are proud to be his wife
- Take an interest in his work

Also, couples should worship the Lord, attend church services, and participate in Christian ministries together. Again, the more activities a couple can do together, the stronger their relationship should become.

The "perfect" marriage is probably never attained, but you and your spouse will certainly do well to continually seek to achieve one. To that end, the two of you should sit down together periodically, review this document, and make any changes in your relationships that are needed. (Be perfectly honest with each other.) If you will do so, the odds are that your marriage will never fail, and it will get better and better! And if you feel your love for your spouse is waning, ask the Lord to give you a special, enhanced, agape love for your mate. You will be amazed at the results!

## CONSIDERING DIVORCE?

As mentioned previously, some surveys have indicated the divorce rate is about fifty percent for both Christians and non-Christians. Also, another survey showed that sixty-six percent of second marriages end in divorce if children are involved. (I repeat a previous admonition: NEVER consider divorce as an option.)

Apparently many people believe marriage is just something to try out, and if it doesn't work, you can always try again. God has a different viewpoint; to Him marriage is very special. Jesus said in Mark 10:6-9 (NIV): "But at the beginning of creation God made them male and female. For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."

### Scriptures that pertain to marriage and divorce

- "Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral" (Hebrews 13:4 NIV)
- "For the Lord, the God of Israel, says he hates divorce and cruel men. Therefore, control your passions--let there be no divorcing of your wives" (Malachi 2:16 TLB)
- "It has been said, 'Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.' But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery" (Matthew 5:31-32 NIV) (The book of Proverbs has much to say about adultery and penalties for committing it. Please read these passages now: Proverbs 2:16-19; 5:3-23; 6:20-35; and 7:5-27.)
- "To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband. But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife. To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord): If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. But if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace. How do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or, how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?" (1 Corinthians 7:10-16 NIV).

I have heard ministers say that physical or mental abuse justify divorce, depending on the severity of the abuse. Decisions to be made by the abused persons in severe abuse cases are always difficult to make, particularly if they are Christians.

But the Lord certainly can intervene and restore the marriage. My marriage was an example of this.

To my everlasting shame, I verbally abused my wife for many years and reduced her to not much more than a blob of protoplasm. As a consequence she planned to divorce me when the youngest of our children graduated from high school. But one day, in desperation, she cried out to the Lord and He filled her with the Holy Spirit; she said the thought of divorce never entered her mind again. Then instead of divorcing me, she turned me over to the Lord. A short time later He filled me with the Holy Spirit and changed me into a “new” man. (She said “I got a brand new husband and didn’t even have to change men.”) I cannot not say that her course of action will always work, but it is up to the individual to try it or ignore it.

While I am on the subject of divorce, let me relate some reasons that people have given for getting a divorce. This is by no means an exhaustive list, and the reasons are not necessarily ranked in order of significance:

Money, alcohol, immaturity, jealousy, unrealistic ideas about love, irresponsibility, cohabitation before marriage, lack of communication between spouses, infidelity, religious differences, abandonment, substance abuse, sexual abuse or incompatibility, interference from parents or in-laws, physical abuse, emotional abuse, inability to resolve conflict, intolerance of petty idiosyncrasies, spousal denomination, refusal to compromise, and pride.

I might add that health issues can contribute to marital strife. We found out the hard way that hormone imbalance and hypoglycemia can put a marriage in jeopardy.

The above list should be examined periodically; and if any one of these reasons is causing a problem in your marriage, please take immediate action to resolve it. Nipping the problem in the bud can save your marriage, and minimize potential emotional damage to you and your children.

If outside help is needed in resolving the problem, seek help from a professional Christian counselor approved by both parties, and who specializes in saving marriages. If your spouse will not go with you, go alone, and “pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

One final admonition: If you are considering divorce, please think of those who will be most affected by it: you, your spouse, and your children. My suggestion to any who are considering divorce is to research the subject on the internet; just enter

something like “Effects of divorce on children,” and “Psychological and emotional aspects of divorce” into your search engine. I entered these two phrases into my browser and was very dismayed by what I found.

- Adverse effects on children ranged from regression in emotional development and behavior problems in the very young.
- Adverse effects in adolescents were rebellion, promiscuity, and suicidal intensions.
- Adverse effects on the parties becoming divorced ranged from anger and fear, to victimization and vengeance.

There are no winners when it comes to divorce!.

## REMARRIAGE

If a person gets divorced, regardless of the reason(s), is it all right for them to remarry? Christian Ministers answer this question in many different ways.

I certainly do not claim to have the last word on the subject, but I will share my beliefs concerning the subject.

- The first thing the couple should do is go to a Christian person who specializes in saving marriages. Your marriage may be saved by getting this help.
- To those of you who are divorced and planning to remarry, the first thing you should do is to be sure you have confessed your divorce as sin and ask for God's forgiveness (1 John 1:9) Also you must forgive your spouse if you in any way blame them for the divorce.
- Objectively analyze your former marriage to detect what you think were the causes for the divorce. (A professional counselor should be able to help in this endeavor.)
- Ask yourself: "If I remarry, will I be able to avoid any and all of my behaviors that were contributing factors in my divorce?" In other words will you be able to profit from your previous mistakes and not repeat them?
- Review the "Choosing a spouse" questions discussed above. And if children are involved in the issue, both the "Choosing a Spouse" questions and the following questions should be discussed by the couple. This procedure should be followed also even if one party has never been married or has never had children.
- Will your prospective spouse be agreeable to the arrangements made concerning the children?
- Will both of you be willing to forgive the former spouse and treat them with respect?
- Will you and your prospective spouse agree to allow each other to discipline all the children, regardless of to whom they "belong"?
- Will you and your prospective spouse agree to accept the other spouse's children as your own? This means you will love them and treat them as you will treat your own children.
- Are the children agreeable to this proposed marriage? If not, you should seek professional Christian counseling for all involved, if at all possible.

It is my humble opinion that *if* a couple has this *God-given love in their hearts*, there will be no thoughts of divorce And each one will do their best to treat their spouse and children (regardless of to whom the child belongs by birth) as the Lord Himself would treat them.

And just think of all the heartaches and problems that will be avoided if there is no divorce!

## AFTER WORD

The key to a successful and happy marriage is “agape love.” This love is the kind of love used in the scripture to describe God: 1 John 4:8 (NIV): “Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.” And in 1 John 4:16 (NIV): “God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him.”

This kind of love is described by commentators as a caring, unselfish, and unconditional love; and it is available only by the power of the Holy Spirit: Galations 5:22 (NIV): “But the fruit of the Spirit is love.”

## MY PERSONAL AFTERWORD

I, J. D. Bilbro Ph.D. pray that those of you who read this manuscript will find it helpful; and if you have not yet accepted the Lord Jesus as your Savior I pray that you will seek help in a God loving, Bible teaching Church that believes and preaches about the need for Salvation and the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. Then they will lead you through the steps to receive them.

If you, husband and wife, have been saved and have received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, you will always have the Spirit of God within you to help you in any and all needs, be they large or small; and I sincerely believe your marriage will be a happy one and will last “till death doeth part.”