

Principles For The Marital Relationship

Introduction. We know that God's ideal for marriage is for it to be a permanent relationship (Genesis 2:24-25). However, God does not want marriages that are merely free from divorce; He wants marriages that are strong, thriving and happy.

Romans 12 is probably an unusual place to go for divine instructions in the subject of marriage. But several human relations are discussed herein and we can take principles that are helpful in making other relationships successful and apply them to the marriage relationship.

I. ***Godly Principles For The Marital Relationship***

A. Husbands and wives should not think of themselves more than they should (vs. 3).

1. How well do you get along with someone who has an arrogant, "know-it-all" attitude? This affects a local church (3 John 9-10).
2. Does this kind of attitude help a marriage? Notice the contextual contrast in vs. 16.

B. Husbands and wives are not identical people (vs. 4).

1. Life would be pretty boring if we were all the same. This certainly does not work in other human relationships, such as stated in the context, and it will not work in marriage.
2. Men and women have distinct personalities and biblical roles.
 - a) Men generally have more aggressive personalities while women have more passive personalities.
 - b) The husband is to function as the spiritual leader and physical provider while the woman is to be the suitable helper and homemaker (Ephesians 6:4; Titus 2:4-5).
 - c) Both men's and women's personalities have strengths and weaknesses.
3. In a marriage, this could be the greatest asset or the worst liability.

C. Husbands and wives are members of one another (vs. 5).

1. This principle is just as true in a marriage as it is in the local church. Go home and look up all the instructions in the New Testament that are directed to "one another." You may be surprised to find over thirty different commands to do such things as love, comfort, edify, exhort, and consider "one another."
2. Matthew 19:5-6 and Proverbs 31:11-12 both forbid the "I-me-mine" concept and approach to marriage.

D. Husbands and wives should show unhypocritical love (vs. 9).

1. A hypocrite is one who is an actor in disguise on stage. Genuine love is the same no matter where you are.

2. Couples should not love for appearance only. I have known of couples who fuss and bicker but when the guests arrive or when they arrive at church services, everything is fine.
- E. Husbands and wives should be kindly affectionate to one another (vs. 10).
1. Affection is tender love, such as from a parent toward a child. This is to be shown to brethren; why not to our spouses?
 2. I am certainly not talking about any inappropriate actions in public. But actions such as holding hands when praying or even saying "I love you" when one spouse leaves each day or over the phone would help build affectionate feelings toward one another.
- F. Husbands and wives should give preference to one another (vs. 10).
1. This instruction is just as applicable in the marriage relationship as it is in the church. We ought to try to out-do one another in showing preference to one another.
 2. We ought to never let parents, jobs, hobbies, possessions, leisure or even children prevent us from showing the proper preference toward one another.
- G. Husbands and wives should be patient with one another (vs. 12).
1. The honeymoon will end and realities will begin to register. Couples can and will face so many difficulties throughout their life together.
 2. Remember the vow: "for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health, in prosperity and in adversity." It is not a "richer-healthy-prosperous" proposition.
 3. Do you know people who have stopped persevering in a marriage? Has a lack of patience ever made you consider quitting your marriage?
- H. Husbands and wives should continue steadfast in prayer (vs. 12).
1. Various passages encourage prayer (1 Thessalonians 5:17; 1 Timothy 2:1-4).
 2. There are numerous assurances in the Bible concerning answered prayer (Matthew 7:7; Ephesians 3:20-21; James 1:5).
 3. Most of us understand the personal and public applications of these verses, but what about a couple?
- I. Husbands and wives should not repay evil for evil (vs. 17).
1. Someone once said, "Spite work is of the devil."
 2. If during arguments, the husband or wife respond in kind to unkind comments, the relationship between them only becomes worse. We should never seek to treat our spouses in an unkind way when there is a real or even a perceived wrong.
- J. Husbands and wives should live peaceably with one another (vs. 18).

1. First of all, we must be at peace with ourselves. If we are not at peace with ourselves, we cannot live at peace with our spouses. We cannot fulfill the exhortation, "as much as lieth in you."
2. Communication is so important in following these instructions. We must talk and listen always being aware of our tone of voice, word choice, facial expressions and body language.

II. ***Presenting Ourselves As A Living Sacrifice***

- A. Husbands and wives are obligated to dedicate their lives to one another.
 1. When a husband or wife understands that their secondary responsibility, only superseded by their responsibility to God, is to their spouse, then their marriage will be much stronger and happier.
 2. Our bodies are for our spouses and no one else (1 Corinthians 6:18-20). When we give our bodies to the Lord, He is pleased with that sacrifice. When we give our bodies to our spouse and keep from inappropriate contact with the other sex, we are building stronger marriages.
- B. Husbands and wives are not to be conformed to the world's standard of marriage.
 1. The world's standard of marriage often run completely counter to God's standard of marriage. The world distorts the true roles of each participant in a marriage. The world's standard makes marriage temporary or places it on a trial basis. Such ideas should never enter into the heart of a Christian. You let God dictate what you should and should not be.
 2. The Lord desires that our mind be remade into a vessel for His service. That is, He wants us to concentrate upon serving Him and doing His will. When we take this principle and apply it to our marriage, our marriages will be stronger.

Conclusion. Again, God's ideal is that marriage should be permanent and happy. Having a marriage that is divorce-free is not enough. With these and other Bible principles, one can go a long way toward having a divorce-proof marriage.