

for her (Ephesians 5:25-33; Colossians 3:19; 1 Peter 3:7)! This is a wonderful blessing to the wife, the marriage, and the entire family. Then, this headship involves both physical and spiritual aspects. It involves working to provide, making decisions, and leading the family to serve Christ. Sadly, many husbands have surrendered or refused to accept this role.

The wife has a submissive role. God knows the home will not function properly with two competing heads of authority. So, He chose for the wife to occupy a submissive role (though she is not any less important; Ephesians 5:22-24; Colossians 3:18; 1 Peter 3:1-6). Wives must strive to be suitable companions for their husbands and submit to their husband's leadership (except when doing so violates God's law, Acts 5:29). The wife's role is crucial to the proper function and care of those in the home (Titus 2:3-5). So much about the success of the marriage and home will depend on the wife fulfilling her role and it is sad when women view this role as being degrading. Sadly, many marriage troubles center over husbands and wives getting their God-given roles confused or trying to negotiate them.

Both have sexual responsibilities toward each other. The marriage relationship provides a God-given place to fulfill sexual desires (1 Corinthians 7:1-2). Problems will develop in a marriage whenever one or both spouses do not take this role seriously (i.e. using it to bargain, not mindful of each other's sexual needs, being selfish, trying to punish the other). In fact, neither spouse should view his/her body as his/her own (1 Corinthians 7:3-5). While this is no permission for any kind of abuse, spouses should have intimate conversations about their sexual needs and whether those needs are being fulfilled. Failing to fulfill this role is a sin, while fulfilling this role gives Satan less of an opportunity to tempt and makes the marriage stronger!

Conclusion

How strong is your marriage? God has given us the perfect blueprint for marriage in the Bible. To have a strong marriage, you must have a godly marriage that is built upon the foundation of faith in Jesus. Then, with Jesus as the foundation, you need the three pillars of commitment, love and respect, and fulfilled roles to hold up your marriage and help it thrive!



Three Pillars Of A Godly Marriage

What makes a strong marriage? A marriage will never be as strong as it can be if it is not a godly marriage that pleases God by following His perfect blueprint in the Bible! God is the one who created both people and marriage (Genesis 1-2) and knows what is best concerning having strong and lasting marriages! Interestingly, with a limited number of Bible passages that directly address the marital relationship, God helps us uncomplicate a relationship that can (at times) seem very complicated and helps people build strong marriages!

The purpose of this lesson is to learn the foundation for a godly marriage and the three pillars God has demonstrated are necessary for a godly marriage.

The Foundation: Faith In Jesus

Faith in Jesus stabilizes a marriage. Like a house, a marriage is only as strong as its foundation (Luke 6:46-49). Many marriages end in great destruction or experience great brokenness because they are built on the wrong foundation (i.e. physical attraction, mutual physical interests, convenience, wealth, possessions, earthly ambitions and goals). In contrast, Jesus and His words provide the proper foundation for both our marriages and our entire lives. Therefore, it is crucial for both spouses to possess a strong, personal, and growing faith in and relationship with Jesus. While God does not permit divorce due to the lack of faith (1 Corinthians 7:10-16), the marriage will never be as strong as it can be without having this mutual faith (Ephesians 6:16).

Faith in Jesus directs a marriage. There are many decisions that must be made in every marriage (i.e. "big" decisions, "small" decisions, individual decisions). A marriage that is not founded upon mutual faith in Jesus will approach these decisions differently than one that is (Proverbs 3:5-7). Having a mutual faith in Jesus will mean that both husband and wife

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will strive to make every decision in a way that fits with the instructions, wisdom, and principles Jesus has revealed in Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16-17). This will result in decisions that please God and help build a marriage that pleases God and is useful in His service. And, this provides a way for husbands and wives to be united in their decisions by having a single common standard.

Faith in Jesus grows a marriage. Rather than getting weaker over time, there is a way for marriages to get stronger and thrive (even through struggles and stresses). But, it will require both people to continue growing in their own faith in Jesus, working every day to grow closer to Him and become more of who God want them to be (cultivating true beauty, 2 Peter 1:5-8). This will result in them growing together, as they grow in the same way (toward Jesus) and for the same goal (to serve and glorify God) rather than growing apart!

Pillar #1: Commitment

Marriage is a life-long covenant. It is sad when many treat marriage as a relationship to enter lightly and end if “things don’t work out.” So, divorce is often threatened, considered, or talked about freely (which further fragments a broken marriage). Then, when divorce does happen, it leaves grief and brokenness in its wake for everyone involved. However, God created marriage to be a relationship that would last as long as both spouses live (Genesis 2:18-25; Malachi 2:14-16). In fact, marriage is a covenant that involves the husband, the wife, and God! So, people do not have authority to end a marriage (Matthew 19:3-6; 1 Corinthians 7:39).

Faithfulness is required by God. Both husband and wife must recognize they are only married to one person and must not act like they are married to another. God particularly emphasizes this point regarding the sexual relationship (Hebrews 13:4). Marriage is the only God-approved place for sexual desires to be fulfilled (1 Corinthians 7:1-2). Sexual relations outside this relationship are sinful and a violation of the marriage covenant (Romans 7:2-3). So, each one must control himself/herself to be pure (even regarding lust, Matthew 5:27-28).

Divorce is not an option. A husband and wife trying to function as God desires will not view divorce as the answer to any problem (Mark 10:11-12; Matthew 19:8). A husband and wife who are committed to lives of faith in Jesus will submit themselves to honoring Christ’s laws – even His strict laws about divorce and remarriage (1 Corinthians 7:10-11). The only authorized cause for divorce Jesus gives is sexual immorality (adultery, Matthew 19:9; 5:31-32).

Pillar #2: Love And Respect

Agape love is essential. The word “love” means many different things to people (i.e. affection, infatuation). While we have one English word for love, the Greeks had four words. “Eros” referred to a sensual and romantic love. “Storge” referred to a familial love. “Phileo” referred to a brotherly love. “Agape” referred to a sacrificial love. Only “phileo” and “agape” are used in the New Testament regarding marriage, though the others are certainly involved. Particularly, “agape” is the highest form of love (i.e. that God has shown to us, John 3:16)! Similarly, God expects His people to possess this selfless, sacrificial love toward Him (Matthew 22:37), all people (Matthew 22:39; Luke 10:25-37), and even toward enemies (Matthew 5:43-48). So, husbands and wives must show this love to each other (Ephesians 5:25-30).

How agape love acts in marriage. Agape love is much greater than other forms of love in that it does not just express fondness, affection, or attraction. Rather, it sacrificially acts in the best interest of the other person – and will infuse a marriage with crucial elements it needs to survive (even when things are challenging and wrongs are committed). In fact, if a husband and wife do not love each other with agape love, nothing else they do for Christ matters (1 Corinthians 13:1-3). And, we must listen to the God-inspired list of what true love does and does not do (1 Corinthians 13:4-7). If there is a problem with your pillar of love, you must work to repair it by learning from Christ’s love for you!

Mutual respect must accompany love. Love and respect should go hand-in-hand in marriage, with both looking to honor each other (Ephesians 5:33). Consider how this works. In a disagreement, respect will speak in ways that recognize the other as the partner you have chosen life. When you speak about your spouse, you will not gossip about or slander that person. When you engage in conversations, you will try to understand and value the other person’s view. When the other expresses himself/herself, you will value what is shared. Husbands (as well as wives) must show honor to each other as they share life together in a unique way (1 Peter 3:7), especially if both are disciples of Christ.

Pillar #3: Fulfilled Roles

The husband is the head of the home. Although this role is often challenged, people of faith must embrace this as the role God has assigned (Ephesians 5:23). It is unfortunate whenever people view this as being oppressive for wives. For, what is described is a beautiful relationship wherein the husband is not a tyrannical and abusive dictator, but one who loves his wife like Christ loved the church and is willing to sacrifice Himself