

# Love or War—Which Will it Be?

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Marriage between a man and a woman is a wonderful blessing given to us by our Creator. It should be a time of love, joy, peace, and harmony, but all too often that which might begin as marital bliss becomes marital warfare, ending in a battle over money, things, and children in a divorce court. Marriage is supposed to be a lifetime commitment “till death do you part”—not just until you change your mind!



Many marriages that do not end in divorce are not really the happy, harmonious marriages that they should be. Why do so many marriages fail, or are mediocre at best? What happened to the love, or maybe it was just plain lust, that brought the couple together? Real love does not fade away, but lust does. Lust is an emotional response that creates blindness to reality, and the couple never really gets to know one another before they get married, and then they end up suffering from “buyer’s remorse.”

Too many are willing to discard the marriage vows they took at the drop of a hat. The negative effects it has on the children, and others, does not seem to matter. After all, the children do not need a stable home with both parents. In their minds it is more important to put their own selfish desires ahead of their children.

There is no room for selfishness within the marriage. “*Let nothing be done* through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each

of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others” (Phil. 2:3, 4, NKJV). This is an absolute necessity in marriage. The husband and the wife must look out for the best interests of their mate and their children—not just their own selfish desires!

In other words, “...by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, *even* in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. But if ye bite [1143, *to wound the soul, cut, lacerate, rend with reproaches*] and devour [2719, *to ruin, injure, destroy*] one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another” (Gal. 5:13-15). These are the two ways of life. You are either a destroyer or a builder.

Marriage is likened to building a house. “Through **wisdom** is a house built; and **by understanding** it is established [3559, *to be firm, stable, secure*]: And **by knowledge** shall the chambers be filled with all precious and pleasant riches” (Prov. 24:3, 4). Building your house requires instruction from the Word of God. “For the LORD giveth **wisdom**: out of his mouth *cometh knowledge and understanding*” (Prov. 2:6).

Therefore, “Be ye not unequally yoked together [2086, *unevenly matched, i.e. having different values, priorities*] with unbelievers...” (2 Cor. 6:14). A basic principle is this: “Can two walk together [3162, *be unified, become one*], except they be agreed?” (Amos 3:3). No, they cannot! If you are not of the same mind, the result will be a rickety, tumbledown shack built on sand instead of a stable house built on a firm foundation.

### **God’s Ordained Order of Marriage**

To reach its highest potential, marriage must follow God’s ordained order that He clearly delineates in His Word. Order means, “*to arrange according to a particular plan.*” A plan is “*a method for accomplishing an objective.*” In this case the objective is a sound marriage with each partner fulfilling **his or her** specific God-given roles!

On the sixth day God created the man. “And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the Garden of Eden to dress [5647, *to serve, to work*] it and to keep [8104, *guard, protect, have charge of*] it” (Gen. 2:15). The man was created before the woman and was placed in the Garden, and given the responsibility of working it and protecting it.

“And the LORD God said, *It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a help* [5828, *one who helps*] meet [5048, *in front of, opposite to*] for him” (Genesis 2:18). A helper is not the leader, but one who helps. Some synonyms are “*aid, apprentice, assistant, deputy, and helpmate.*” The woman was created to be the man’s helper—not his boss!

Opposite means “*being the other of a matching or contrasting pair.*” Contrast means: “*to show differences when compared*” (*Webster’s*). There are obvious **inherent physiological and**

**psychological differences between men and women.** This is not rocket science! You are either a male or a female at birth, and that cannot be changed. The numerous differences between male and female are there because men and women were designed by Almighty God to **fulfill different roles within the family!**

Some characteristics that are associated with masculinity are independence, self-reliance, aggressiveness, focus and leadership. Some feminine characteristics are being emotional, dependent, nurturing, helpful, sensitive to the needs of others, and gentle. As adults, females tend to be much better multi-taskers than men, which makes them well suited for being homemakers, since homemaking often involves numerous things taking place at the same time. Men are generally better in highly focused projects; therefore **real men** do not make very good house husbands.

“And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made He a woman, and **brought her to the man**” (Gen. 2:21, 22).

The man was not taken to the woman, but the woman was brought to the man. She was given to the man as a gift; therefore the woman belonged to the man. In our culture the woman takes the surname of her husband, which shows that she belongs to him. “And Adam said, **This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh:** she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man” (v. 23).

This is the same pattern as the Messiah and the bride, “For we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones” (Eph. 5:30). We belong to Him because He purchased us. The man “...is the image [1504, *likeness, representation*] and glory [1319, *inherent, intrinsic worth*] of God: but the woman is the glory [1319] of the man. For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. **Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man**” (1 Cor. 11:7-9).

God’s ordained order of marriage is this: “But I would have you know, that **the head** [2776, *one to whom others are subordinate*] **of every man is Christ;** and **the head of the woman is the man;** and the head of Christ *is* God” (1 Cor. 11:3).

This is the Biblically ordained order of marriage that was established by our Creator from the very beginning, and it has not changed. The man is to be the head of his family, under the authority of Jesus Christ, and the wife is to be under the authority of her husband.

“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh” (Gen. 2:21-24). Therefore “Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power of her own

body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud [650, *deprive, withhold what rightfully belongs to another*] ye not one the other, except *it be* with consent for a time..." 1 Cor. 7:3-5).

**The man is to leave his father and mother to become the head of his own family!** The woman, who is under the authority and protection of her father, will leave her family to come under the authority and the protection of her husband. This is revealed in the wedding ceremony when the father of the bride hands her off to the bridegroom.

On the spiritual level, we must be willing to leave our family to become one with Christ our Bridegroom. "He that loves father or mother **more than** [5228, *above, over*] Me is not worthy of Me: and he that loves son or daughter more than Me **is not worthy of Me**" (Mt. 10:37).

Likewise, in a marriage you must love your mate more than your own family. If your family is more important to you than the person you intend to marry, **then do not get married!** If it even lasts it is not going to be a happy marriage. The wife is supposed to follow her husband, not her family from which she came. If she can't handle being separated from mommy and daddy, then she is obviously too immature for marriage.

"Wives, **submit** [#5293] **yourselves to your own husbands, as to the Lord.** For **the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the congregation:** and He is the savior of the body. Therefore as the congregation is subject unto Christ, so *let* the wives *be* to their own husbands in everything" (Eph. 5:21-24).

*Strong's* #5293, *hypotássō*, "to place or arrange under. It is from #5259 /*hypó*, "under," and #5021/*tássō*, "to arrange in an orderly manner."

The opposite of order is chaos and confusion. **There cannot be two heads of the same family without creating confusion and disorder within the family!** The man did not appoint himself to head the family—God did! Likewise, God appointed the woman to be subject to her husband, not to rule over him.

"But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority [831, *one who acts on his own authority, autocratic*] over the man, but to be in silence [2271, *a quiet, tranquil life*]. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived [1818, *seduced, hoodwinked into an illusion*] was in the transgression. Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety" (1 Tim. 2:12-15).

Eve usurped her husband's authority by eating the forbidden fruit, and that turned out well, didn't it? Because of Eve's action God said, "I will greatly multiply thy sorrow [6093, *toil, pain*]

and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire [8669, *a longing*] shall be to thy husband, and **he shall rule over thee**" (Gen. 3:16).

Adam was not deceived, but his mistake was obeying the words of his wife **instead of the Word of God**. "And unto Adam He said, Because thou **hast hearkened** [8085, *to hear with attention, or obedience*] **unto the voice of thy wife**, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed *is* the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat *of* it all the days of thy life" (Gen. 3:17).

When men do not properly exercise their role as the head of the family, a vacuum in leadership is created that must be filled. Women are filling the vacuum and the family is being turned upside down and destroyed. "As for My people, **children are their oppressors** [5065, *press, harass, to drive*], and **women rule** [4910, *to rule, have dominion, to reign*] **over them**. O My people, **they which lead you cause you to err** [8582, *to go astray, to wander*], **and destroy the way of your paths**" (Isaiah 3:12).

God set the order in marriage, and "...God is not of confusion [181, *instability, a state of disorder, disturbance*], but of peace [1515, *harmony, concord, tranquility*] ..." (1 Cor. 14:33). Therefore the husband is to "...**love his wife even as himself**; and **the wife see that she reverence** [5399, *respect*] **her husband**" (Eph. 5:33).

If love and respect are in the marriage, then there will be peace and harmony in building their house instead of conflict and war that will destroy their house, or at the very least turn it into a ramshackle dump that no one enjoys.

### **The Role of the Husband**

As the head of his family, the husband is not to be a tyrant or a bully. He is "not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect" (1 Tim. 3:4, NIV). These are the qualifications of an elder in the congregation, and they are also applicable to a husband who oversees his own family.

As we covered previously, there are many differences between male and female that can lead to misunderstandings. Marriage is a learning process that is gained by experience.

"Likewise you husbands, dwell with *them* according to knowledge [1108, *knowledge gained from first-hand experience*], giving honor [5092, *a valuing, a price*] unto the wife, as unto the **weaker vessel**, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered" (1 Peter 3:7).

A woman goes through many emotional and physical changes during her life due to her hormonal changes as a result of her monthly cycle, pregnancy, childbirth, nursing a baby, empty nest syndrome, and eventually menopause. These changes can result in varying degrees of emotional responses that the husband must learn to be understanding of, and not get angry.

“Husbands, love [#25] *your* wives, and **be not bitter** [4087, *bitter, harsh, angry*] against them” (Col. 3:19). *Strong’s #25* means, *to love, value, to have a preference for, regard the welfare of, manifest liberal concern for, be faithful towards, to delight in*. Love, “It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no account of wrongs” (1 Cor. 13:5, *Majority Standard Bible*). Love does not dwell on the negatives.

However, loving his wife does not mean the husband has to give in to her every whim to show his love. Some women have been known to use real or imagined problems to get their own way. It is like children who quickly learn how to control their parents through whining and crying. A woman who uses such tactics is not behaving as a godly woman should. The husband must learn to be discerning in these matters and be firm in his God-given leadership role.

“So ought men to **love** their wives as their own bodies. He that **loves** his wife **loves** himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes [1625, *to promote health and strength, to bring up, educate*], and cherishes [2282, *to impart warmth, foster with tender care*] it, just as the Lord *does* the congregation” (Eph. 5:28, 29).

Nourish means: 1. *to feed or sustain with substances necessary to life and growth*. 2. *to stimulate; foster; develop; support (a feeling, attitude, habit, etc.)*. Nourishing involves both physical and spiritual development.

It is the husband’s responsibility to teach his family the Word of God, for “... man doth not live by bread only, but by every *word* that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live” (Deut. 8:3). You shall teach the Word “...when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise up” (Deut. 6:7).

Instruction takes place at all times. You teach not just by reading the Word, “But **be ye doers of the word**, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves” (James 1:22). How the husband treats his wife and how the wife treats her husband are the examples you set—either good or bad—that teach the children.

It is the husband’s responsibility—**not his wife’s responsibility**—to provide for the family. “But if any provide [4306, *look out for beforehand*] not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel” (1 Tim. 5:8). This is another example by which the children are being taught the proper roles in marriage.

In the Garden Adam was told, "...to dress [5647, to serve, to work] it and to keep [8104, guard, protect, have charge of] it" (Gen. 2:15). When they were put out of the Garden Adam was told, "In the sweat of your face shall you eat bread..." (v.19). It does not say "by the sweat of Eve's face shall you eat bread." The man was created physically stronger to do the work that was needed to provide for the family. Just because technology has created many jobs that women can do does not change the fact that the man is to be the provider for the family.

However, too many men are refusing to take on their responsibility as the sole breadwinner, and want their wives to work away from home, or maybe the wife might insist on working away from home. This can have many detrimental effects on the marriage. Having her own income can make the wife more independent, and thus less dependent on her husband. That weakens the husband's role as the head of the family.

Sometimes a working couple will work different shifts so that one of them will be home with the children, but the parents seldom have the time for one another that they need. Or a husband may work away from home for days or weeks at a time. Can a man properly lead his family when he is seldom at home? No! Neither can a husband and wife build a strong healthy relationship and a successful marriage without being together!

Marriage is not about having more things. It is about the relationship between husband and wife and their children. Having more income often leads to having more debt, e.g. a bigger house that you really do not need, and more credit card debt to fill the house with toys that you do not need, which leads to stress and squabbles over money that can ruin the marriage.

"Better *is* little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble therewith" (Prov. 15:16). Therefore, "Keep your life free from love of money, and **be content with what you have**, for He has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Heb. 13:5 ESV).

Be content and **do not live beyond your means**. "But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into *this* world, *and it is* certain we can carry nothing out, and having food and raiment let us be therewith content" (1 Tim. 6:6-8).

Since it is the man's responsibility to support his family, then he should be gainfully employed before he marries, and have ample income to provide a place to live, savings for emergencies, and the things that a newly married couple may need. Pay off any debts that you may have accumulated beforehand. The only acceptable debt would be on real estate because it generally increases in value, and most cannot afford to pay cash for a house.

If a man takes care of these things **before** he is married then, his wife will have no need to work outside of the home after they are married.

## The Role of the Wife

The role of the wife in a successful marriage is every bit as important as her husband's, but **it is a different role**. The wife has a great responsibility as a bearer of children, and managing the household **under the authority of her husband**. “I will therefore that the younger women marry, **bear children, guide the house** [3616, *to occupy one's self in the management of a household*], give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully” (1 Tim. 5:14).

Bearing children is one of the primary purposes of marriage, for God seeks godly offspring (Mal. 2:15). There is no greater opportunity for a woman than to be able to help teach and raise her children into moral, upstanding, healthy adults that will carry on the next generation. That is a benefit to society that is far beyond any other career opportunity that a woman could possibly have.

Let us consider some of the things that a housewife might do: preparing healthy meals; canning, freezing, and drying foods; grocery shopping; cleaning and decorating the house; washing, folding, ironing and putting away laundry; training the children (including disciplining, settling disputes, teaching, and doctoring them); running errands; keeping track of the family's finances and paying bills; being a seamstress; gardening; etc.

These are not just menial tasks, as society would have you think. They have a great deal of positive influence on the physical and spiritual development and health of the family, and the culture in which we live.

Having a clean house to live in, instead of filth and trash, and having clean clothes instead of filthy rags to wear, have a positive influence on the family. Decorating a home can make it feel warm and inviting instead of stark, cold, and uninviting. A home should be a place of refuge that the whole family and visitors can enjoy. Taking the time to cook meals from scratch using actual food like fresh vegetables, fruit, whole grains, and meats, instead of sugary factory-made junk food, will have a positive impact on the family's physical and mental health.

A wife that does these things, “...looks well to the ways of her household, and eats not the bread of idleness. Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband *also*, and he praises her...” (Prov. 31:27, 28). This is a wife that shows love to her family—not just by words, but by her actions.

Being a homemaker requires a great deal of knowledge and skill; therefore the older women are to “...teach the young women to be sober [4994, *balanced, steady*], to love their husbands, to love their children, *to be discreet* [4998, *self-controlled*], chaste, **keepers at home** [3626, *keeping at home and taking care of household affairs*], good, obedient [5293, *to place or rank*



*under*] to their own husbands, **that the word of God be not blasphemed** [987, *to slander, hence to speak lightly or profanely of sacred things*]” (Titus 2:5).

A woman that does these things is a good wife. “*Whoso finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor of the LORD*” (Prov. 18:22). Some codices, Aram., Sept., Syr., and Vulg. read “a good wife.”

Not every wife is a good wife. “Every **wise** woman builds her house: but the foolish plucks it down with her hands” (Prov. 14:1). Where is a wise wife to be found? “...[A] **prudent wife is from the LORD**” (Prov. 19:14). To be prudent is to “*have wisdom, skill, expertise, be intelligent, shrewd in management of practical affairs, frugal*” (*Webster’s Dictionary & Thesaurus*).

Unlike the foolish wife, a prudent wife builds her house. She is intelligent, has wisdom, and is a woman who is very good at handling household affairs. Note that she is frugal, which is, “*characterized by or reflecting economy in the use of resources*” (*Webster’s*). This description fits the virtuous woman.

“Who can find a virtuous [2428, *uprightness, integrity, strength, fitness*] woman? For her price *is* far above rubies. The heart of her husband safely trusts her; so that **he shall have no lack of gain**” (Prov. 31:10, 11). She is not a high maintenance, wasteful woman who squanders what her husband provides, and accumulates debt. On the contrary, she manages and cares for the resources that her husband provides exceedingly well, so that he has no lack of gain.

The virtuous wife is not a self-centered wife, who is seeking her own selfish ways to the detriment of her husband, but “She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life” (v.12). She never runs her husband down in the eyes of her children or anyone else.

The godly woman has “...a meek and quiet [2272, *quiet, tranquil, peaceful*] spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price” (1 Peter 3:4). This is the opposite of a foolish woman. “A foolish woman is clamorous [1993, *loud, to murmur, growl, roar, be boisterous*]: she is **undisciplined and knows nothing**” (Proverbs 9:13). The foolish woman will destroy her house by her constant complaining and arguing. “...[T]he contentions [4079, *brawling, strife*] of a wife *are* a continual dripping” (Prov. 19:13). *The Geneva Bible* comments thus on this verse, “*As rain that droppeth and rotteth the house.*”

A contentious woman is not humble, but is full of pride. “Only by pride cometh contention [4683, *debate, strife*]: but with the well advised *is* wisdom” (Prov. 13:10). Therefore, “...if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom

descends not from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, devilish” (Jam. 3:14, 15). True wisdom comes down from above, and “...is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, *and* easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy” (v. 17).

Even if a wife has a husband who is an unbeliever, note how she is to behave. “Likewise, ye wives, *be* in subjection [5293, *to place or rank under, to subject, mid. to obey*] to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conduct of the wives; While they behold your chaste conduct *coupled* with fear [5401, *reverence, respect*]” (1 Peter 3:1, 2). (Obviously a wife does not have to obey her husband if by doing so she would be breaking God’s law.)

It is not by being contentious that a wife may win her husband over, for “*It is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman in a wide house*” (Prov. 21:9). Instead, “...let it be **the hidden woman of the heart**, in that which is not corruptible, *even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price*. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, **who trusted in God**, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement [4423 from 4422, *excitement, caused by any emotion, but especially by fear*]” (1 Peter 3:4-6).

**Conclusion:** Marriage between a man and a woman can be a time of love, joy, peace, and harmony, or it can be a time of never ending battles. As the saying goes, “It takes two to tango.” On the negative side, it takes two to fight and tear down, or on the positive side, it takes two to cooperate and build up.

No husband is perfect, and no wife is perfect. Do not dwell on the negative traits, but on the positive traits. When you dwell on the negative, all you are doing is feeding it, and causing it to grow until it destroys you. By focusing on the positive, you are building up. Marriage is all about building your house, not tearing it down and destroying it.

Life is too short to spend it fighting. “Go, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a cheerful heart, for God has already approved your works: Let your garments always be white, and never spare the oil for your head. Enjoy life with your beloved wife all the days of the fleeting life that God has given you under the sun—all your fleeting days. For this is your portion in life and in your labor under the sun” (Eccl. 9:7-9, Majority Standard Bible).

“See that none render evil for evil unto any; but ever follow that which is good, both among your selves, and to all. Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you” (1 Thess. 5:15-18). Enjoy love—not war!