

# God's Strategy For A Stable Marriage

**In a national poll taken among people across a broad spectrum of careers and wealth, the number one cause of stress in their lives was relationships.**

**The closer a relationship, the more potential there is for conflict and stress, and marriage is the closest relationship we can experience as human beings.**

**Therefore marriage relationships could be the most stressful area of your life.**

**Rarely do marriage relationships disintegrate from external pressures alone; internal stress is the major factor of a break-up.**

Like one man described his marriage: *"It started as the **ideal** but soon became an **ordeal** and I began to look for a **new deal**."*

Another man said of his marriage: *"We were married by a Justice of the Peace, but since then I've had no justice or peace."*

There are three great stresses in marriage. They are:

## **1) Lack of consideration**

**Ephesians 5:33** [Living Bible] *"So again I say, a man must love his wife as a part of himself; and the wife must see to it that she deeply respects her husband, obeying, praising and honouring him."*

This verse is a summary of all that has been said about relationships and marriage in chapters 4 and 5 of the book of Ephesians.

**We are being told to respect each other, to give honour and dignity to others.**

Don't be concerned only about your own rights.

**It is amazing how inconsiderate we are to the people we love the most.**

We take no thought as to how our change in plans or activities will affect them.

Sometimes we are insensitive to their needs; we don't feel that way so your feeling must be invalid, we dismiss it; why should anyone feel like that?

**Others' feelings are valid even if we don't ever experience them.**

**Sometimes we try to change our mates into our own image.**

**That is not being considerate.**

We enter marriage with the idea that we will be able to change those things in our mate that we least like.

So we launch into a personal improvement plan for our mate with us as the coach, then much to our amazement they start to resist what we are trying to change in their personality for the *"better"*.

We cannot understand why they don't want to improve themselves, why they won't co-operate!

**How can I be considerate of my mate?**

**a) Accept each other's differences**

**God so often brings exact opposites together in marriage, to help them develop character.**

Opposites brought together in the close relationship of marriage gives them a great potential or great pressure.

For example: one is an **early riser** and the other likes to **hibernate till noon**;

one is impulsive and **daring**, the other is **cautious** and reserved;

one of you loves to **spend** money, the other is a **"tight wad"**;

one of you is very **romantic**, the other is a **"dud"**;

one of you is always **on time**, the other is **"flexible"**;

one of you loves to **talk**, the other is **tongue-tied**.

**Romans 15:7** [NIV] *"Accept one another, just as Christ accepted you..."*

**That includes our mate.**

**Differences are not wrong, they are just different.**

God is a God of great variety.

Look at the diversity in His physical creation all around us.

**God does not want us to be all clones without variety in personality.**

In fact He has made each of us unique.

**There has never been another person like you in the whole of the world, nor will there ever be another like you.**

**When two people agree on everything in a relationship one of them is not necessary.**

**Proverbs 27:17** [Good News Bible] *"People learn from one another, just as iron sharpens iron."*

**When iron sharpens iron, sparks tend to fly but the outcome can be profitable.**

**Differences in marriage give balance to that relationship.**

Other things that can show consideration in marriage is attention to the seemingly small things.

The short note to say thankyou, the brief telephone call, the unexpected small gift, all of which show that you were thinking of them at that moment of your busy day.

**If there was more courting in marriage there would be fewer marriages in court.**

The problem is that when we stop courting and become married we become complacent.

Like the wife who said to the husband as they entered the honeymoon hotel, *"to avoid embarrassment, let us act as if we have been married a long time."*

The husband replied, *"ok then, you carry in the bags."*

You may say *“I don’t feel like loving my wife or respecting my husband.”*

I reply *“it is easier to act your way into a feeling than to feel your way into an action.”*

If we act considerately we will then feel considerate.

### **Actions lead to feelings.**

**1 John 4:19** [Living Bible] *“So you see, our love for Him [God] comes as a result of His loving us first.”*

**We feel love towards God because of His loving act towards us through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross.**

Be aware of others’ needs.

**We all have needs we cannot fulfil ourselves and support for our own weaknesses.**

Mark Twain said *“sometimes I can go two weeks on just one good compliment.”*

We all need affirmation, to feel appreciated, **not** to feel neglected.

Why is all the above true in the marriage relationship?

**The root of every marriage problem is selfishness.**

*‘I do what is best for me’* attitude.

If you want to reach your Golden Anniversary you need to keep the golden rule!

**Matthew 7:12** [NIV] *“So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you.”*

**We need to replace the “me” with “we”.**

## **2) Communicate in love**

This is how to have a stable marriage.

**Ephesians 4:15** [Good News Bible] *“Instead, by speaking the truth in a spirit of love we must grow up in every way to Christ, who is the head.”*

Speak the truth but do it in a loving way.

Why does Paul say this?

Because the second greatest pressure or stress in a marriage is poor communication or a lack of communication.

*“My husband won’t talk to me”* is the most used statement wives make in marriage counselling.

One wife said, *“the only time my husband communicates with me is when he wants food, sex, or to change the channel on the TV; the rest of the time he just grunts.”*

**God gives some practical communication tips in this passage.**

**Ephesians 4:26** [Living Bible] *“If you are angry, don’t sin by nursing your grudge, don’t let the sun go down with you still angry, get over it quickly.”*

I wonder how many people would get any sleep if they waited to go to bed until they had resolved every marriage argument, but it would be a good motivation to work out the problem.

**Ephesians 4:29** [Living Bible] *“Don’t use bad language. Say only what is good and helpful to those you are talking to, and what will give them a blessing.”*

Don’t say things that tears your mate down, only things that build them up, that seeks to meet their needs.

**Ephesians 4:31-32** [Good News Bible] *“Get rid of all bitterness, passion and anger. No more shouting or insults. No more hate filled feelings of any sort. Instead, be kind and tender-hearted to one another, and forgive one another, as God has forgiven you through Christ.”*

**That is real practical advice in marriage relationships.**

Don’t give in to all these negative things.

**Remember you never get your point across by being cross.**

**A common mistake we all make in marriage is that we are so busy fixing the blame that we can’t fix the problem.**

**We love to accuse and excuse.**

Do you ever blame your mate?

No!

I’ll give you a little test, four types of blame.

a) **Exaggerations** – with gross generalities *“you never”, “you always”, “I’ve told you a million times”*

We exaggerate for impact.

b) **Labels** – *“get it yourself helpless”* – *“yes sir your highness”* Little labels we attack each other with.

c) **The family historian** – bringing up the past.

Such people have the ability to remember every fault and mistake you ever made, every wrong thing you ever said.

These are stored with razor sharp clarity and can be recalled at any moment.

I’ve always said *“husbands, you don’t need to remember all your mistakes, for it is no use two people remembering the same thing.”*

d) **Loaded questions** – questions you ask knowing they can’t be answered.

For example, *“can’t you do anything right?”*

*“Why can’t you act like a human being?”*

Can you really answer such questions?

**One area in which we all have confusion in communications is in the deciding of roles and responsibilities.**

God has laid out a *“blueprint”* for the family.

Now you men don’t get too excited about this *“wives be submissive to husbands”*; don’t get your elbows at the ready.

Men don’t get excited about **Ephesians 5:22-24** until you have applied **Ephesians 5:25-33**.

It is interesting in this passage of scripture, there are directed to wives 3 verses and 51 words but 9 verses and 155 words directed to husbands.

Ladies, that is because men are more thick headed, things don't sink in so easily.

God has to work a bit harder to make the point.

**Ephesians 5:25** [NIV] *“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for Her.”*

**Wow! That is some responsibility!**

**Ephesians 5:28-29** [NIV] *“In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no-one ever hated his own body, but feeds it and cares for it, just as Christ does the Church.”*

We are to love our wives just as Christ loves the Church. That is a significant responsibility.

**How does Christ treat the Church?**

- a) He puts it first place in His Life.
- b) He does everything to meet its needs.
- c) He gave His Life for the Church.

**Husbands, you want to be the leader of your family?**

Jesus said he who leads has to be the servant of all.

**You are a leader by serving the needs of those you lead, your wife in particular.**

**Matthew 20:26-28** [Living Bible] *“... anyone wanting to be a leader among you must be your servant. And if you want to be right at the top, you must serve like a slave. Your attitude must be like My own, for I, the Messiah, did not come to be served but to serve and to give My Life as a ransom for many.”*

That is what it means for a husband to be a leader in his home; **not to be a dictator, to be a leader by example.**

I believe that when a husband is doing what The Christian Bible is telling him to do the wife will have no reluctance to fulfil her role.

Why?

Because he is doing the very things his wife needs the most.

The Greek word used for “love” in this passage is the verb “Agapao” and the corresponding noun “agapé”.

Quote from Vines Bible Dictionary *“Love that can be known only from the actions it prompts. God’s Love as seen in the gift of His Son. Not the love of complacency, not drawn out by any excellency in its objects but one of deliberate choice that lies in the person’s nature. It is not an impulse from the feelings and does not always run with the natural inclinations nor does it expend itself only upon those for whom some affinity is discovered. Love that seeks the welfare and opportunity to do good towards the object of that love, constantly fostering love in others in a practical way.”*

**True love is not a feeling but a chosen action.**

Now with this in mind let us read what is directed towards wives.

**Ephesians 5:22** [Living Bible] *“You wives must submit to your husbands’ leadership in the same way you submit to the Lord.”*

### **What is submission?**

Submission does **not** mean passive.

Does **not** mean being a door mat.

Does **not** mean slave or inferior.

Does **not** mean you never have an opinion.

It means to be like Jesus Christ, have the same attitude He had towards the Father.

**Christ was God in that way equal to the Father but by His own Will placed Himself in subjection to the Father to serve mankind.**

**Philippians 2:3-10** [NIV] *“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth...”*

**The wife who may not agree with everything her husband does but offering her opinion will then support what her husband as leader of the family decided to do.**

That husband is to raise that wife to a place of honour in that marriage.

**Proverbs 31:10, 29** [Living Bible] *“If you can find a truly good wife, she is worth more than precious gems!” ... “Her children stand and bless her; so does her husband. He praises her with these words: ‘there are many fine women in the world, but you are the best of them all!’”*

**In the marriage union the husband and wife become as one and you cannot have two heads on one body.**

A two headed animal is a deformity.

The problem is we too often do not separate the role from the person.

Some wives say *“my husband is a jerk”* but he still is in the role of leader in the household.

### **How do you change someone?**

**You change them by treating them the way you want them to be.**

You want someone to be loving?

Treat them in a loving way!

You want your children to be honest?

Treat them as children who you trust to be honest!

**Ephesians 5:24** [NIV] *“Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.”*

**If the second part is untrue then the first part is also untrue; it means the church doesn't have to submit to Christ.**

### **3) Be committed to your partner in marriage**

**Ephesians 5:31** [NIV] *“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.”*

**The two become one in God's Eyes.**

This is a quote from out of the Old Testament that God said to the very first couple, Adam and Eve.

In the Hebrew, it means they shall *“cleave to each other”*.

Like two sheets of paper being glued together when you try to part them, both sheets are torn and hurt.

It is like two pieces of steel being welded together.

When this happens the end product is stronger than the two separate pieces are separate.

**God intends marriage to be permanent.**

People say it is just a piece of paper!

No it is not.

**It is a vow made before God.**

**God's Word is always for today.**

Even if you have had failed marriages in the past, settle this commitment question now.

**Separation and divorce must not be an option in any marriage that is to be stable.**

If we do not settle the issue of commitment in our marriage there will always be an underlying current of tension, because there is always the possibility that one may walk out.

**A lot of people who say “I do” don't.**

**How do I reduce stress in my marriage by reinforcing my commitment?**

**a) Throw away our parachute**

Without a parachute there is **no** bailing out of the journey we have chosen to take with our partner.

**If both partners are agreed that divorce is not an option, it is a very strong motivation to make things work.**

You stop wasting all the energy wondering what would happen if you got a divorce and focus it on making the marriage work by changing yourself and praying that God would change your partner.

If divorce is still an option then when trials come in the marriage there will be no stability in that relationship, and pressure will make walking out an easy option.

**b) Concentrate on developing your spiritual life together**

Make God the centre of your relationship.

**The divorce rate in this country is now 1 out of 3 marriages.**

**The divorce rate of those where there was a Christian marriage ceremony is 1 out of 50.**

**The divorce rate of those where it was a Christian marriage ceremony and the couple are committed Christians attending church regularly the rate is 1 out of 1,105.**

That is the difference it makes to have Jesus Christ in the marriage.

He makes the glue of a spiritual bonding in that union.

The family that prays together stays together.

God's intention for marriage is that it will be a shelter in the storms of life, a support in any stress we find in the world.

**What makes a marriage stable in this stress filled society?**

**Consideration** – one for another seeking to know and fulfil the needs of our mate.

**Communication** – in a loving way to one another be kind and tender-hearted building each other up.

**Commitment** – divorce must not be an option. Marriage is till death does us part, for in God's Eyes we are one flesh. It takes more than two to make a marriage – it takes a husband, a wife and God.

**Psalm 127:1** [Living Bible] *“Unless the Lord builds the house, the builder's work is useless.”*

**Unless we allow God to be in our marriage there will always be an additional instability in the marriage that doesn't have to be there.**

Who thought out marriage in the first place?

God did.

Marriage was the first institution.

**There was a marriage before there was a church.**

**The family is God's ideal setting for mental, intellectual and spiritual growth and where we best learn to develop good relationships that give stability to life.**

But without God in the centre of the family we are without the help of the originator of marriage and the designer of relationships.

**Allow God to build your marriage into a stable, joy-filled relationship.**