

## How to build and maintain a marriage that is destined to improve

*Here are 7 basic principles*

- (1) Learn what the Bible says about marriage. Read also other recommended literature which draws the biblical principles together and lays them out in a helpful manner. (Examples: *Christian Living in the Home* by Jay E. Adams; *Strengthening Your Marriage* by Wayne A. Mack; *Christian Marriage* by D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones) If you have had the rare privilege of growing up in a Christ-centred home where you have seen these principles lived out in your parents, you have already experienced the best pre-marital counselling you will ever receive. Go and do thou likewise.
- (2) Men, you must take your role as head of the house very seriously. As head, you are responsible for everything that goes on in the home and must provide for the needs of everyone in it (see Eph. 5:23). These two always go together. How can one supply effectively the needs of others unless he also rules over the circumstances concerning them? And how, in turn, can he win their respect and allegiance unless he also helps them by giving them everything they need? This is an awesome responsibility, but, if you are a Christian, you have God's Word to guide you and God's Spirit to support you.
- (3) Headship does not imply being the boss and lording it over everyone else. What it requires, rather, is humble, exemplary leadership. It requires being a wise and discerning manager. This is someone who gives of himself first, and then, in doing so, feeds, brings out and encourages the best response in others (see Eph. 5:25). This is the sort of person whom others admire and want to be around. In all my years of marriage counselling, I have never yet met a wife who did not tell me that she would gladly submit to her husband, and honour him in every way, if he would but love her as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for her.
- (4) Don't forget the spiritual aspect of headship. As Christ Himself feeds His people, body and spirit, so let every household head feed his wife and family in these same two ways. Husbands, you must take leadership in family devotions, in talking freely and candidly about the Lord, and in letting your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven (see Deut. 6:5-7).
- (5) If the man is the head of the home, the woman is its centre. She is its heartbeat. Indeed, it is not too much to say that she IS the home. It would be complete and utter folly, therefore, to minimize her importance or to undermine her role. There is a saying, "If mama aint happy, there aint nobody happy," and, because of her key role, it is very true. Husbands, it is your job to see that your wife is happy and fulfilled. Cherish her, spoil her, never let her know a single day when she is not supremely happy that God gave you to her, and her to you. If you do so cherish her, you are contributing to the well-being and joy of the entire house. If you fail here, however, you are striking the axe at the root of the tree and it may well fall.
- (6) Women, you must take your role as the heartbeat of the home very seriously, too. Clearly, your husband cannot serve effectively as head without your respect and support (see Eph. 5: 33), without your being a team member with him (see Gen. 2:18). Through your help and encouragement, in fact, you are the very one who is able to make him a much better husband and father (and leader in whatever else he does) than he could ever otherwise be. If he responds to you, you have the power to make him or break him.
- (7) God calls us to function faithfully in our separate roles. This is service we render to God. You must never say, "I will be a better wife if my husband improves." What kind of service is that? The fact of the matter is that, if you seek to be a better wife, your husband will probably improve as well, and will do so exponentially. Try it, and see for yourself if this isn't so!