

Completely Revised Second Edition

**MARRIAGE: Delight or Disaster**

Second Printing

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successfully argue that it is better not to marry, yet some supposedly learned people do. Of course there are exceptions to this norm, but they must be recognized as exceptions and not the rule. Many readers may feel that I am placing unnecessary emphasis on this point, but, “they that be whole need not a physician,” and the cult of “playing the field” is growing with the same rapidity as the number of untaught and improperly taught youth. Then there are some religionists who use 1 Corinthians 7, verses 1, 8, 26 and 27 to mean that it is best for Christians not to marry. It must be noted, however, that the Apostle Paul prefaces these comments with, “Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me:” (Verse 1), which leaves no doubt that he was answering specific questions which had been put to him in a letter concerning personal problems certain members of the Corinthian church were facing. Nor was the Apostle Paul a woman-hater as some think, as evidenced in Ephesians 5:22-33.

There is a beautiful passage in Proverbs where the wise king Solomon says, “Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favor of the Lord.” This passage from Proverbs 18:22 is backed up by a yet more beautiful text in Proverbs 31, beginning with verse 10. While some of the details may seem outdated, the message and meaning are good for now and the future.

“Who can find a virtuous woman for her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil.

“She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life. She seeketh wool and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. She is like the merchants ships; she bringeth her food from afar. She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens. She considereth a field and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard. She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms. She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night. She layeth her hands to the spindle and her hands hold the distaff. She is not afraid of the snow, for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet. She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple.

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE MAGIC CALLED MARRIAGE

IT HAS ONLY BEEN a couple of generations since the dream of nearly every young girl was to grow up to be a housewife and mother and live happily ever after. She looked forward with great anticipation and many dreams of the handsome young man in his tux eagerly awaiting her at the altar as she lock-stepped down the aisle in a beautiful long white gown to the magnificent strains of Lohengren’s wedding march.

Marriage is what most boys looked forward to as a proof of their manhood; a time of gaining a most priceless asset; an emotional release of joyous energy; the day when they would become fathers and be able to take their sons to play ball or go fishing, horseback riding or whatever it was that they especially enjoyed doing; to become the head of their own households, and maybe prove better than their own fathers.

Both boys and girls looked forward to the day when they could take their family to the zoo, on picnics or to church together and enjoy a closely knit family relationship.

Marriage can -- and should be the zenith of all human happiness. Nothing can even begin to match that ecstatic bliss of the well matched bride and groom. There is a spirit of belonging and joy.

Marriage based upon sound principles of mutual understanding; with a deep-seated, Christ-centered love each for the other, will grow stronger and stronger as the years go by, permanently bonding two persons into one being.

Marriage is still the normal way of adult life. It is those with some unusual background circumstance who choose to remain single. Their problem may be psychological or medical; a traumatic experience such as an abusive or openly unfaithful parent or a malfunctioning gland; a spiritual dedication or a physical handicap; or they have been brainwashed by our television and porn magazine elements to look at marriage as confining and a hindrance to the new sexual freedom being foisted off on society today. Despite the numbers of drug-related murders, probably the greatest number of murders are in retaliation for interference in marriages by an outsider, or the unfaithfulness of either the husband or wife.

Marriage is for now, yet it is also the thing of the future! People as young as thirteen and fourteen are getting married, and people in their eighties and nineties are still pairing up in matrimony.

This God-given instinct for marriage is the foundation upon which all civilization is built. Here is a point to ponder. Through marriage and the family unit, God ordained that man should learn to communicate his thoughts and ideas. If “Mama” didn’t take the time to teach the baby to say “Mama” and “Daddy”, the baby would not learn communication skills and without this foundation, there could be no buildings, electric lights or washing machines, no radio, television or computers, no automobiles or airplanes. It is within the home type environment that the framework for all human learning, communication, education, and everything that goes to make up civilization is first established in each individual child. I urge you to think about that fact for several minutes before you continue reading.

The desire for marriage can turn a hearty-eating young man or woman into one who can hardly touch food when the happiness they have found in the arms of their loved one is threatened.

“For this cause shall a man leave father and mother and shall cleave to his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh.” (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:5 and Ephesians 5:31.)

What, then, is this magic called marriage? When does “marriage” take place? Are two people really married the minute the minister, judge or other public official says, “I now pronounce you man and wife?” Why do so many marriages end in divorce? Is there any way a “marriage on the rocks” can be saved and is it worth the effort? Is it ever right to remarry after divorce?

But in the last thirty or so years, a much more radical change in moral climate has taken place than most of us would have dreamed possible in the 1940's and 1950's. While there have been some minor changes in marriage itself, the most significant change has come from a barrage of media hype against marriage, and particularly the sanctity of marriage and sex. Today, the Bureau of Census recognizes POSSLQ (Persons of Opposite Sex Sharing Living Quarters) as a family unit and one city recently gave unmarried couples nearly the same status as the married couples. However, the fact remains that the surest way to enjoy life on this earth is the God-ordained, old-fashioned marriage based on old-fashioned moral values and real caring love each for the other. While there is a price to be paid in the area of loss of total independence, the benefits of a happy marriage

far outweigh the cost.

I grieve for young people growing up in broken homes today. They have no role model to follow so they can see first hand what a loving, caring, sharing home life can be like. A good marriage is a real delight, not only to be a part of, but also to observe from the outside.

Marriage is NOT the simple legalization of the sex act. If this is the only purpose for which a couple join themselves one to the other, their marriage is doomed to failure right from the start. It lacks the true magic of marriage -- the bond of true Christian love.

Nor is marriage the gaining of a prized possession alone. While a good wife or husband IS the most valuable earthly asset a person can have, yet that factor -- the parading of “the best little woman in the world” as “my wife” will never form a real basis for lasting happiness.

The prospect of marriage can turn a dispirited and bitter person into one whose eyes sparkle like diamonds. A solid, Christ-centered marriage, one in which difficulties are settled by prayer and seeking God’s will; brings an aura of happiness to the countenance of the couple that makes all who see them happy, too.

Mankind was created to operate as a trinity; The Spirit of God, the male and the female parts. Outside of this Divinely ordained plan, there is a hollowness which results in frustrations, irritability, and unhappiness. In today’s world full of happiness hungry and frustrated people, much of the problem can be traced either to putting God out of one’s life, or to refusal of His plan and order in marriage. Just as you cannot defy the law of gravity and get away with it, it is also impossible to defy any of God’s other laws and get away with it. Gravity is still the law even though we have learned to fly airplanes and shoot rockets into space orbit as satellites, but not without paying a price in expended energy and the law still remains. When the energy source is gone, the airplane or satellite will come down in response to that law.

In the very beginning of the world, God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him,” (Genesis 2:18). Throughout the whole course of Scripture, this thought and theme has been the foundation of human existence.

In fact, God’s plan of marriage and the family so totally underlies all His dealings with man that no rightly reasoning person can

Immune Deficiency Syndrome) chlamydia, and cervical cancer were virtually unheard of, “in vitro fertilization” to cause conception of what has come to be called “test tube babies” was still an impossible dream, and the murder of hundreds of thousands of unwanted babies before birth, so nicely called “abortion of a fetus” was still an illegal operation. Marriage was still the “in” thing, and this chapter was written from the perspective that all but a very few were already convinced marriage was the ideal to be reached. In this new edition, I must spend a bit more time and effort praising and extolling the good side of “The Magic Called Marriage.”

In most cases, a marriage begins after something catches the eye to attract a young man to a young lady, and, if there is ever to be the first date, she must also find some attraction to him! The visual attraction somehow converts to an emotional feeling that translates into a desire to be with the other person more and more constantly until real love blooms and marriage, rather than mere sexual relations without commitment is the result.

Let's picture for a few moments what an ideal marriage may look like throughout a lifetime. While many other scenarios are possible, let's look at Don and Karen Cotton (all names used as illustrations in this book are fictitious.)

Don was a third grader when Karen moved to his neighborhood and entered the first grade at his school. While they were in different classrooms, they soon met in the lunchroom and each sort of liked the other right away, but not as boyfriend and girlfriend. Then they saw each other at Sunday School and Church and as time progressed, each found much to admire about the other. Still, it was not a real “puppy love” romance but just a friendship. Don “sort of liked” several other girls in his own grade for a few months each and even got quite serious with one before seeing that she was beautiful to look at but her personality and his, her ambitions and his were not in agreement. And somehow Karen seemed to happen on the scene at just the right time for Don to tell his troubles to and to give him a cheery word.

And Karen had her own little romances as she grew also, but increasingly, as she got into her early teens, too many of the boys took friendship as a license to ask for a chance to “make out” or “make love” and Karen's upbringing would not allow her to feel right about giving a gift she could only give once to anyone she did not intend to share her whole life with. As a result, many of the guys she “sort of

“Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land. She maketh fine linen and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant. Strength and honor are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come. She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children arise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all. Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain; but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates.”

There is nothing so comforting to a tired man as to return to a secure home after a hectic day at work where it seems like everything that could go wrong has gone wrong, and to find there a loving wife who is preparing his favorite dinner and awaits him at the door with a cheery greeting. “I love you, Darling. I know you're tired, so why don't you sit right down while I get you a cold glass of tea. Dinner is almost ready.” She accompanies her words with a loving, heartfelt kiss. His enjoyment multiplies if loving and well behaved children come running and throw their arms around his legs or hug his neck as he scoops them up in a genuine demonstration of their love and admiration.

The wife also knows a glow of warm feeling when her husband, recognizing that she, too, may have had a rough day with the washing machine breaking down, the garden hose coupling smashed by the car, and to top it all off, she burned her hand cooking that good dinner he now smells, tosses his lunchpail or briefcase on the sofa and enfolds her in a loving embrace. Or perhaps she also works at a job and he calls her at work and arranges to pick her up to take her to dinner at their favorite restaurant, whispering a sincere, “I love you,” over the phone, and courting her just like he did before they were married during the meal, except that they now have so many more memories to talk about, plans to make and they know each other so much better.

Today, there are many on every hand on the television, movies, even the radio, in magazines and newspapers and even fellow workers on the job who urge that “free love” is the modern man's answer to the craving for sex and love. They view marriage as a drag and of no more real purpose that to legalize the sex act. Denying the necessity of monogamous marriage to the preservation of civilization, they advocate all kinds of sexual perversion and legalization of sex

relations between any two persons who happen to agree at the moment. There are many clubs and social groups where sex is the primary drawing card, and it is hard not to hear reports of “wife swapping” parties and teen sex orgies, but the irony of it all is that the suicide rate is higher among these “lovers of freedom” than any other group in society. While they laugh and scoff at the sanctity of marriage and the value of purity, they themselves are held fast in a search for happiness that always manages to be just a step beyond their reach. So then they become despondent and try to “end it all”, while the person who has taken Christ Jesus as master and the real head of his or her household and is married in the Divine Will of God is happy without having to search for happiness.

I have talked with numbers of people who freely admit to having had sex relationships outside of the bounds of marriage. Some make no profession of Christianity, while others were ministers of the Gospel, or divinity students. Some are heavy drinkers, others, tee-totalers, but nearly nine out of ten (an accurate poll was not made statistically) would not trade their relationship with the one person to whom they are now married for the freedom to have relationships with every other person of the opposite sex in the world. Both men and women are happiest when they follow God’s pattern.

The sex act in marriage with a heart bond of love and a genuine concern for the happiness of your lover simply cannot be equalled outside of the purity of marriage. (See Hebrews 13:4.) Any person who has ever experienced this relationship of love is most unlikely to ever look for the other kind. If you add your points carefully, there can be little but pity for those who choose to live outside God’s plan of marriage.

Marriage is a happy state, but by all means look before you leap! If the person you are thinking of marrying has habits you can’t stand, remember that you are considering a lifetime of living with that person, and seldom, if ever will you succeed in getting them to change, especially if you wait until after the vows are made to try. Better that you drop that one and find one who meets the conditions you have set in your mind. Remember, if the fear of losing you before you are married is not enough to make that person change, and if you are not enough in love to overlook the fault without wishing they would change, the difference of opinion will grow greater when you are married and faced with the responsibilities of bills and house payments. If the courtship period is not enough to bring the two of you into complete or near complete agreement, marriage will not

improve the matter. You may choose to argue the point, but you won’t change the fact! So why ask for trouble? If you will just be a little patient, you will surely find one who is perfect in your eyes and can do no wrong! Then grab and hang on -- tight -- for life.

When I was a teenager, the goal of nearly every one of my schoolmates was to be married. To the young person this is still a big thing. This is the time of setting out to make one’s mark on the world. It has often been said that behind every successful man is a good woman. This is more than just an idle saying, for the young man who loves his wife and has been blessed with a good one will feel impelled to do his very best to be worthy of her love and affection.

She in turn will render wise advice, comfort him when he’s discouraged, discourage him when he’s being foolish, and do all she can to help him climb the ladder of success. She glows with pride at his accomplishments; her love apparent to all, her devotion bringing a glow of both her husband and friends. She will attack with a vengeance any who dares to speak against her beloved.

The reciprocation continues as he can see no wrong in anything she does. He delights in her, and is not tempted by any other beautiful face or figure that happens along, for his desire is to this wonderful little wife of his.

The truly happy marriage can never be wrecked by outside forces. Each of the marriage partners sees an inner beauty that only their mate in the whole world possesses, and neither would think of doing anything to spoil that relationship. Through the years, such a marriage, especially if it is founded upon the Rock, Christ Jesus, will grow stronger and sweeter and the danger of disenchantment ever less and less. Each test becomes a drop of cement bonding them even more securely into one being. Yet, rather than feeling subservient each to the other, it is a feeling that the other is but an extension of himself or herself. Each is free to do as he pleases, but that pleasure is greatest when he knows he is pleasing his lover.

Thus do two separate human beings become one. Not merely in the sexual union, important as that is to a happy marriage, but one in goals, one in outlook on life, and, most important of all -- one in fellowship with Christ. They cease to be self-centered, and this kindly affection for each other extends outward towards everyone they meet.

When the First Edition of this book was written, AIDS (Acquired

liked” didn’t like her and she kept finding Don was a sincere friend she could talk to about it.

As the teen years progressed, Don and Karen began to pay more and more attention each to the other and to realize that the two years difference in their age did not seem to matter all that much. It was a proud day for Karen when Don asked her to be his date for the Senior Prom and her parents trusted her enough to let her go.

From then on, Don and Karen became a real twosome. Even when he went on to working part time and attending classes at the nearby community college, they would find time to have lunch together or go on picnics or social or church events together. Because both were raised in a good Bible believing church, Don respected Karen’s virginity and never tried to take advantage of her. Many times the couple went places with both of their families and the two families seemed to be doing quite a bit together because of the closeness of their children.

The summer after Karen graduated from High School, she and Don were married. From the start, each tried to please the other. Don got the greatest personal pleasure from seeing the smile and sparkle of delight in the eyes of Karen when he did something she liked. And Karen was happiest when she was doing things that brought a sparkle of joy to Don’s eyes. Both were dedicated to honoring their Lord Jesus first.

Goals of home and car ownership, going places and doing things together, and even family planning and the birth of their children were kept in the perspective of reflecting God’s glory ahead of any personal goals. So, with one united purpose, disagreements were few and far between.

As the years passed, outsiders admired the very evident love that showed outward from Don and Karen’s marriage.

When you saw Karen, she talked first about the goodness of the Lord, followed by glowing reports about Don and the children. When you saw Karen in the grocery store or the department store, you usually found Don nearby, and whenever they looked at each other, you could see the adoration each had for the other.

“Dear, what do you think of this cabbage?” Karen might be overheard to say.

“Looks pretty wilted to me, Sweetheart,” Don might be heard to

reply.

On larger issues such as clothes and appliances, cars and their home, there was also a united seeking of God's will before any final decision was reached.

As their children grew, one could always observe love and respect and a desire to please "Mom" and "Dad" which resulted in a willing obedience that made other parents wonder and corporal or other punishment seldom necessary.

In time, when Don and Karen's children became adults and married, they, too seemed to make wise choices and have happy homes, following similar though different patterns to what their parents had. And as Don and Karen found ever more silver replacing their youthful hair color and crows-feet wrinkles growing from the corners of their eyes, the love and devotion seemed to grow more precious and their love ever deeper.

Why, in a day of family break-ups, divorce and single parent homes, were Don and Karen able to have a delightful marriage and live a picture-book lifetime? Of course there were disagreements, but the caring love and concern each for the other's feelings and their desire to reflect honor and glory to their God were more than sufficient to overcome the disagreement.

Other couples, and especially the young people who saw the Cotton family and rubbed shoulders with the Cotton children saw something delightful and desirable and tried to also follow their example. They were living examples of "the Magic called Marriage."