

PRINCIPLES of MARRIAGE

Most readers are married or have been married. I mention this fact for two reasons. First, this article is about the subject of marriage. We'll have a frank and honest discussion about marriage from a Biblical standpoint. Secondly, this article deals with reasons our marriages work and sometimes do not work. You might want to forgive me now for what I am about to write. It may address issues in your own marriage relationship. My hope is that this article will stimulate discussion with your spouse and be an encouragement to you.

Think back for a moment and consider the training and teaching you received in preparation for marriage. If you were like most, you will agree that there was no formal training. That is, you didn't go to college or a technical school to be trained and certified as a husband or wife. There is no diploma or certification that qualified us to be married. However, of all the choices we make in our life time, the selection of our spouse and decisions we make on how to be a husband or wife, are the most profound and have the most far-reaching implications.

Children (other people) will come from those decisions and the process continues from generation to generation. In fact, we exist today because of decisions made by our parents. This brings me to my initial point about the subject of marriage. Our parents have had a profound impact on us with regard to marriage. It was our parents that served as our primary teachers in preparing us for marriage. Just like any training course, the quality of that training has a direct impact on the success or failure of the endeavor.

But our parents are not the only resource to prepare us for marriage. The Bible has a lot to say about marriage. In fact, the very institution of marriage originates from the Bible. Our parents and basic Biblical instruction about marriage are our primary sources of reference for marriage. But have you considered the teaching we have concerning marriage given in the Bible? Let me explain a bit more. Since our parents are our primary examples, have you considered what our parents in the Bible teach us about marriage? Which parents am I referring to? Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, and Jacob and his wives, Leah and Rachel, have a lot to teach us about marriage!

Let's review 10 Biblical principles about marriage and then, examine what our Biblical fathers and mothers have taught us.

TEN BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES of MARRIAGE

1. Marriage is a covenant between a man and a woman, initiated by the exchange of vows.
2. The Husband is the head of the house and responsible for the marriage.
3. The Husband is commanded by God to love his wife.
4. The Wife is commanded by God to respect her husband.
5. The Husband and Wife are joint heirs to life.
6. Man needs a Wife.
7. A Wife is God's grace to the Husband.
8. The Wife is the most powerful influence over her Husband.
9. Marriage is a sexually intimate and passionate relationship.
10. Marriage is the mystery of the Messiah's relationship with us.

How we approach marriage, more importantly, how we fulfill it, is extremely important to our own welfare and homes. It will either yield great joy and fulfillment or heartache and disappointment. The Biblical principles we will review are general in statement.

Depending on one's station in life, there can be exceptions. Some people remain single and never marry. Therefore, these Biblical principles serve as a base definition for the subject of marriage.

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLE of MARRIAGE # 1.

Marriage is a covenant between a man and a woman, initiated by the exchange of vows.

Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. -- Genesis 2: 24
Marriage is not a partnership or a contract; it is considerably more than that. Marriage is a covenant. Partnerships and contracts are agreements of "consideration given for consideration received." These kinds of agreements are formed by requests and promises. One party requests something and offers something in exchange.

The other party trades one item of value for another item of value. A covenant is not made primarily to gain value nor to exchange one thing for another. It is not maintained by both parties meeting their obligations; it is a reality of giving oneself regardless of the return value. A covenant is of undetermined length. It is forever or until it can no longer be done, "Until death do us part." This covenant causes names to change. This covenant changes the place

called “home.” A marriage covenant establishes a preference in relationship greater than parent and child. A marriage covenant creates a new reality that the whole of creation accepts, including the Creator.

This is why a divorce is more than breaking a contract. A divorce rips the very fabric of the soul when the marriage covenant is broken. A broken vow, an oath that is breached, or a pledge not fulfilled is an internal dilemma reaching deep into the person that no soothing balm can reach. A broken contract can be solved by paying for the damages, but the damage of a broken covenant continues longer after.

Some men and women never quite leave their father and mother when they get married. Consequently, they have not chosen their spouse above all others. In truth of fact, they never made the proper marriage covenant from the beginning and results become inevitable. Many pre-marriage counselors will recommend that a new couple live separately and away from both sets of parents to guarantee that the proper bond (cleaving) is established in the marriage.

Becoming “one flesh” is the consummation of the verbal vows, but it is not a replacement for them. Becoming “one flesh” before the vows of marriage is fornication and distorts the entire pattern and purpose of intimacy in the marriage.

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLE of MARRIAGE # 2.

The Husband is the head of the house and responsible for the marriage.

Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.

-- Genesis 3: 16

This verse is probably hated by more women than any other verse in the Bible. The spirit of rebellion will not sit idly by in the heart of a woman when she hears the words, “he shall rule over you.” To a woman, these words confront her unbelief and mistrust in her husband. From a counselor’s point of view, it is evidence of not loving her husband. Love believes all things.

For men, this is probably the most misunderstood verse about marriage. True mature leaders know that the authority to rule comes after full responsibility has been accepted. True authority is given by those who are under the rule. Demanding authority over another or exercising that authority to prove its existence is a leader on the path to failure. A wife’s desire for her husband will naturally result in her giving him authority over her, because she believes

he has taken full responsibility for her. From a counselor's point of view, a man who exercises control and leverages his prospective wife is not yet comfortable being fully responsible for his house and his wife. It is evidence that he does not yet know how to love his wife.

During the courtship phase of a marriage relationship, the man pursues his prospective wife. It's a little like a game. Actually, he chases her until he gets caught!

What was done in courtship should not end at the wedding. The marriage should continue with the man initiating and the woman completing. Should correction be needed or should something need to be started it is the husband's responsibility and duty to start the actions.

Does this mean that the man is to blame when something goes wrong? Is it the husband's fault if the marriage fails? No. Taking responsibility is not concerned with or interested in finding fault and placing blame. Taking responsibility is focused on improvement and correction – doing it better. Blame and fault are subjects of immaturity.

A wife who is married to a good husband knows that she can make a mistake and not be blamed or made to be guilty. Her desire is for her husband and she wants him to have rule over her to bring about solutions.

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLE of MARRIAGE # 3.

The Husband is commanded by God to love his wife.

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it

Ephesians 5: 25
Love in a marriage seems as natural as breathing for the wife. But for the husband, love in the marriage is a determined act of his will. Yes, love is an emotion; yet, for many men in the earlier years of the relationship, it is the "love of the chase." This is why some men never grow up and keep chasing other women after being married. God's command for a man to love his wife is more than an emotion, a feeling, or a game. It is a determined act whereby he must direct his energies for the specific purpose to provide for, to protect, and to be passionate toward his wife.

Some men provide well and are willing to lay down their lives to protect. This is sacrificial love. However, they regard conjugal sex as one of the benefits for having done the first two. Little do they know that God commands them also to be a passionate, intimate husband. It is part of God's plan for the husband to "love" his wife. There is not a wife who doesn't want her husband

to desire her for being a woman. This is where the game is carried on into the marriage. She wants to be pursued and desired before she catches him. The husband must learn to keep chasing his wife, even though he is caught.

Fundamentally, the number one need of a wife in a marriage is security. The husband is commanded to meet this need. By loving his wife, he provides her a home, the resources to live, and a safe and secure place for her and the children. By loving her emotionally, he assures and comforts her, shielding her from fear and harm. By loving her physically, he proves that his attentions and focus are on her and she is secure in his desires.

The commandment to love his wife means that the husband is to commit his best energies, resources, creativity, and attentions to focus completely on his wife. It is more than just provision and protection. Loving a wife means preferring her above ALL others.

When a husband commits adultery, he has proven to his wife that he does not love her. He has broken the commandment to love his wife. You can not separate sex from love in a marriage. The argument by an adulterous spouse that it was just sex (lust), but “I really love you” is a totally flawed argument. It simply is not true. Sex and love in marriage are inseparable.

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLE of MARRIAGE # 4.

The Wife is commanded by God to respect her husband.

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. --

Ephesians 5: 22

Too often, Biblical teachers have equated “be subject” with “obey.” As a consequence, opposition has grown in the American culture to the extent that many women refuse to say “love, honor, and obey” in the traditional wedding vows. It is really a huge mistake. The word “obey” is not the proper emphasis for “being subject to” or “submission” as translated in the commandment.

Let me offer an entirely new perspective. Instead of the word “obey” amplifying the phrase “be subject to” or the word “submit,” let’s use the word “respect.” Now let’s restate the commandment. *Wives, respect your husband, just as you respect the Lord.* That changes something dramatically. Instead of the ultimatum to obey (like a lowly slave), respect opens the door to balance and understanding. Respect is something given in measure to being respectable. Respect is in parallel with love and honor. Obedience

does not require love or honor; however, respect does require them.

The number one complaint of distraught wives is that they don't respect their husbands. It is very difficult for them to do so when the husband continues to do things not worthy of respect. Many times wives are justified in their complaint. A husband who does not provide, protect, or show passionate love for his wife is on thin ice for respectability. But oft times, the man does provide and protect, he is faithful and desires his wife. However, his wife treats him in a very disrespectful manner simply because he is a man. Wives who do this should think back to how their mother treated their father. You will discover that many times this is a pattern and it is learned behavior.

This is why God commands wives to respect their husbands. Wives must make a determined decision to accomplish this. It takes energy and a clear will to do so. Instead of holding your husband to an artificial standard of respect (he does everything I want him to do), a wife should come to know her husband for the true goodness that is in him.

Fundamentally, the number one need of a man in a marriage is respect. The wife is commanded to meet this need. The commandment to respect your husband means praising your husband, both to him and to others, and submitting to his leadership, guidance, and judgment. Even if he makes a mistake and is wrong. He will learn.

This is how men learn every day at their jobs. A wife who believes she needs to teach her husband by correcting him only succeeds in embarrassing him. When a wife disrespects her husband with critical words, treats him with disdain, and holds him in contempt, she destroys her primary source of provision and protection from God. She also breaks God's commandment to respect him. When a wife learns how to respect (be subject to, submit, and obey) her husband, he'll treat her like a thoroughbred, instead of a nag.

Rodney Dangerfield, a comedian, made his entire career on this one theme of marriage. "*I can't get no respect.*" No matter what the story or circumstance about his wife, he repeated that line over and over. Why did the joke last so long? All good humor is based in the truth. Every husband laughed again and again, because he identified with the feeling being expressed. "*I can't get no respect.*"

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLE of MARRIAGE # 5.

The Husband and Wife are joint heirs to life.

And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.

-- Genesis 2: 22

To have children, it requires a man and woman joining together to procreate. A man can not do it alone nor can a woman do it alone. They jointly form the product of each new child. Woman was not made from the dust of the earth like man; therefore, she should not be treated as dirt. Woman did not fly down from heaven; therefore, she should not be over anyone's head. She was taken from her husband's side; therefore, her rightful place is at his side.

The woman's need for security can only be met fully by her husband. The husband's need for respect can only be met fully by his wife. When both needs are being met, the marriage is like the wedding ring. It is made of precious metal and valuable gems; it goes round and round, with no beginning and no end. Life is good and wonderful.

When one of the needs (either security or respect) is not being met, the ring is broken. There is now a clear beginning and end to the ring. The ring has become a piece of twisted metal. The passion of love becomes the passion of anger and hate. It leads to treachery. The remaining metal of the ring becomes a bad memory and is pawned for a fraction of its cost. However, the treachery and hate can last long after the divorce. When both needs are met, the home is a pleasant place for all.

Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table.

-- Psalms 128: 3

To be a joint heir means to share in the same heritage and inheritance. Husbands and wives come from different houses, but when they are joined together, they are part of the same house with the same Heavenly Father. When the woman was taken out of the man (the rib), it indicated that they were together when man was first created. Marriage is reuniting the man and woman together as they were in the beginning. This is marriage based on spiritual understandings.

There is a fundamental difference between a secular and spiritual marriage. A secular marriage is a shared proposition. It's a mutually agreeable contract. Sometimes, these marriages stay together simply because they don't have any other choice. The spiritual point of view for marriage is one that embraces the author of marriage. It is one where both the husband and the wife are under the authority of God. But the bottom line is this: a spiritual marriage is where the husband and wife know they were destined for each other. They also share in the same problems and joys of life. They make their "choice" for each other believing it is God's will.

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLE of MARRIAGE # 6.

Man needs a Wife.

And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.

– Genesis 2: 18

It has clearly been proven that men live longer and are healthier as a result of marriage. Companionship is a key component to marriage. To have the same companion from youth to old age is true friendship and love. The word "helper" is really "help meet." A "help meet" is much more than a mere helper. "Help meet" means companion; it means she is there until the job is finished. Help meet also has a strong spiritual tone.

A wife *helps* the man to *meet* the Lord. A wife will either multiply your ministry in the Lord, or take you right out of it. Don't even think about going into the ministry full time if your wife is not right there with you serving the Lord. There is not a spiritual man alive today, when he is about to be marooned on a deserted island for many years, and must make a choice between having his Bible or his wife with him... he'll trust his memory for the Scripture, but he wants his wife with him. He needs his wife with him.

10: Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies.

11: The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil

12: She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life.

-- Proverbs 31

Most men are not experts about jewelry. They really don't know the difference between a real diamond and a fake one. Most of them see a colored stone in a ring and think it is pretty, but have no idea what it really is or what it is worth. All they really know is that the ones they like cost a lot more money than they wanted to spend.

Consider this for moment, how frequently do you see real rubies, diamonds, emeralds or pearls. The Bible says that an excellent wife is more rare than jewels. Husbands may not be experts about precious gems, but they can discern a wife more rare than jewels. He knows what trusting in her means and how he will be safe with her the rest of his life. He knows that her great value is not about gain or investment. He knows that she is priceless and can never be replaced.

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLE of MARRIAGE # 7

A Wife is God's grace to the Husband.

Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD.

-- Proverbs 18: 22

The favor mentioned here is unmerited favor or grace from God. That means that men don't deserve all the good they receive from their wives. This is simply a truth that wise men come to learn. Even more so, when a wife truly understands that she was presented by the Lord for her husband, she develops wisdom.

House and riches are the inheritance of fathers and a prudent wife is from the LORD.

-- Proverbs 19: 14

The most important and vital things of life come from the Lord. When a man finally becomes smart enough to actually stop and smell the roses, he will do so after getting a dozen of them for his wife. The more times he stops to smell the roses, the smarter he will get.

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLE of MARRIAGE # 8.

The Wife is the most powerful influence over her Husband.

And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.

-- Genesis 3: 12

Adam was more persuaded to seek the pleasure of his wife than to seek the pleasure of God. A Godly man must learn quickly how powerful his wife is over him with her charms and tears. A Godly wife must learn quickly not to misuse and harm her husband in trying to get what she wants.

Allow me to share a word picture that illustrates this point. A husband is like the captain of a sailing ship. He directs his resources and uses skill to raise and lower his sails, he sets a course for distant ports, and he determines what cargo he will carry or trade.

But his wife is the wind in his sails. Carry this picture out a little further. His wife can be unsupportive and very still. No matter how many sails he unfurls, nor how great his mast might be, no wind means he just sits and floats. If his wife is stormy and objectionable, the ship is in a storm with sails torn and masts broken. Many ships are lost at sea because of the hurricane that rose up. But a steady ship in a steady breeze can sail on a great adventure.

Simply said, a husband is the captain of his ship, but his wife is the wind in his sails. It doesn't take much of a breeze for the ship to move. I can assure you that if a wife just blows in her husband's ear, his sails will catch that breeze.

Some wives think that the best way to "help" the captain is by grabbing the ship's wheel and setting the course they want. This is really mutiny and results in the ship going in circles. In the movie *"My Big Fat Greek Wedding,"* the mother counsels her daughter on how to "help" the father make a decision. "The father is the head, but the wife is the neck," says the mother. My counsel is in line with my word picture.

If the wife really wants to have the ship sail a particular way, then give him a favorable breeze in that direction. He'll sail that way and will look for breezes that ultimately lead him to his destination, too. The greatest joy that a captain can feel is to be one with the wind, every sail filled, the rudder is set amidships, and hear the words, "Aye, Aye, Captain. Steady as she goes!"

A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband: but she that maketh ashamed is as rottenness in his bones.

-- Proverbs 12:4

The greatest harm that can be done to any man is done by his wife. Men can insult men over and over; it just makes them mad and they get “tougher.” When a wife shames her husband, she skewers his heart and vital organs. The barbeque is not pretty.

Most wives are not trying to shame or embarrass their husbands. They are trying to motivate and stimulate their husbands, who seem unresponsive to them. The mistake of embarrassment is really unintentional; it just happens. It happens because wives have twisted a major Biblical instruction. Wives (mothers) are to *teach* their children and *serve* their husbands. Too often, wives *serve* their children and attempt to *teach* their husbands.

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLE of MARRIAGE # 9.

Marriage is a sexually intimate and passionate relationship.

And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

-- Genesis 2: 25

Before we address this Biblical truth about marriage, some spouses avoid this topic altogether and do not discuss intimacy and passion with anyone (including their spouses). With all due respect to everyone's privacy, please skip to the next section if this topic offends you. Please continue reading to understand what the Bible has to say about passion, which is different from lust.

Many years ago, I heard an experienced husband and pastor teach young married men the proper definition of marital love and sex. He said it in two short sentences. "Until the day comes that you are totally ravished with your wife, you have not fallen in love with her. Until the day comes that you can not even imagine how another woman could satisfy you like your wife does, you have not yet obeyed the commandment to love your wife like the Lord loves us all."

*18: Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth.
19: Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished always with her love.*

-- Proverbs 5: 18-19

There is a world of difference between lust and passion. Lust is sin and a loss of self-control; passion is a fire that forms the very metal of marriage.

Most wives, after 30 days of marriage, are convinced that they married an over sexed man. It's primarily the frequency thing. Wives spontaneously think about sex once every 20 days; while men frequently think about sex during a day. Men are hard-wired to often believe that having sex with their wife will help any headache. Many a man thinks that a great way for his wife to rest and relax after a long hard day with the kids is to have sex with him. Some men truly think they will become smarter in business by having more frequent sex with their wives.

They base this on the feeling of being more alert, alive and vigorous

afterwards. Men are highly visual and imaginative creatures when it comes to sex. They perceive a direct link in their sexual energy with the very energy of life.

Wives like to have sex in marriage also, but not like a man. Wives view marital sex like fine wine. You don't drink fine wine at every meal. Wine needs a particular glass. The temperature needs to be correct. There is a special way to open the wine and test it. What wives really want in marital sex is romance and passion. That is why romantic scenes have candles, flowers and a glass of wine.

Now, here is the shocker! The Bible has its own dramatic way of illustrating marital romance and passion. First the man leads and the wife responds.

6: How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights!

7: This thy stature is like to a palm tree, and thy breasts to clusters of grapes.

8: I said, I will go up to the palm tree, I will take hold of the boughs thereof: now also thy breasts shall be as clusters of the vine, and the smell of thy nose like apples;

9: And the roof of thy mouth like the best wine for my beloved, that goeth down sweetly, causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak.

10: I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me.

-- Song of Solomon 7: 6-10

A Biblical marriage is a sexually intimate and passionate relationship. The satisfaction, fulfillment, joy and pleasure are part of God's plan for the marriage. You don't have to be an expert at the very beginning of the marriage. Many believe that the very learning experience of sexual intimacy is part of the lifetime of joy in marriage. I agree. Marital sexuality is a life-changing-experience and part of the changing-of-life-experience.

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLE of MARRIAGE # 10.

Marriage is the mystery of the Messiah's relationship with us.
This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

-- Ephesians 5: 32

There have been a world full of poets and philosophers explaining love and marriage to us. But this mystery described in the Bible far surpasses them all. If you will ask any married person why they put up with their spouses' mistakes and quirks, they will give the same answer regardless of gender. "Because, I love him (her)." It is because love covers a multitude of sins. This is the same simple answer for why God continues to deal with us. He loves us, and His love covers the multitude of our sins.

Lessons from our Biblical fathers and mothers...

What Abraham and Sarah Teach Us about Marriage

There is one incident in the marriage of Abraham and Sarah (then called Abram and Sarai) that the Bible mysteriously inserts. It concerns a trip to Egypt and an encounter with Pharaoh.

11: And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt, that he said unto Sarai his wife, Behold now, I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon:

12: Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, This is his wife: and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive

*13: Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister: that it may be well with me for thy sake; and my soul shall live because of thee.
14: And it came to pass, that, when Abram was come into Egypt, the Egyptians beheld the woman that she was very fair.*

*15: The princes also of Pharaoh saw her, and commended her before Pharaoh: and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house.
16: And he entreated Abram well for her sake: and he had sheep, and oxen, and he asses, and menservants, and maidservants, and she asses, and camels.*

17: And the LORD plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai Abram's wife.

18: And Pharaoh called Abram, and said, What is this that thou hast done unto me? why didst thou not tell me that she was thy wife?

19: Why saidst thou, She is my sister? so I might have taken her to me to wife: now therefore behold thy wife, take her, and go thy way.

20: And Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him: and they sent him away, and his wife, and all that he had.

-- Genesis 12

So, what is this story doing in the Bible? What is the purpose of this story? Let me answer in clear and unmistakable terms. It is a lesson for husbands.

Never, under any circumstances [I don't care if you think you are in mortal danger],

never treat your wife like she is your sister!

She Is NOT Your Sister. SHE IS YOUR WIFE !

Do not kiss your wife like she is your sister. Do not do *anything* with your wife like she is your sister (even spiritually). Treat your sister nice; but, treat your wife like she is your wife! You are asking for trouble like you never imagined if you offend this principle. There is also a corollary to this principle: Do not treat one of your spiritual sisters like she is your wife. That is another set of problems you don't want.

Lessons from our Biblical fathers and mothers...

What Isaac and Rebekah Teach Us about Marriage

To demonstrate how powerful our fathers and mothers are in teaching us behaviors as husbands and wives, Isaac made this exact mistake with Rebekah when they visited king Abimelek.

7: And the men of the place asked him of his wife; and he said, She is my sister: for he feared to say, She is my wife; lest, said he, the men of the place should kill me for Rebekah; because she was fair to look upon.

8: And it came to pass, when he had been there a long time, that Abimelech king of the Philistines looked out at a window, and saw, and, behold, Isaac was sporting with Rebekah his wife.

9: And Abimelech called Isaac, and said, Behold, of a surety she is thy wife: and how saidst thou, She is my sister? And Isaac said unto him, Because I said, Lest I die for her.

-- Genesis 26

You don't have to worry about Pharaoh or Abimelek giving you trouble. It is your wife who will have a problem with you.

Before we leave this Scripture let's make sure that we have a clear understanding about something. Isaac was more than "caressing" his wife. You can caress your sister, but "caressing" here is considerably more. The King James Version Bible uses the word "sporting." Isaac wasn't playing tennis either. The actual Hebrew word means a combination of things: laughter, playing, entertaining with desire.

Actually, Isaac and Rebekah teach us something very powerful about marriage in how they first met and married. If you will recall, Eliezer, the servant of Abraham was dispatched to get Isaac a wife from the region where Abraham himself came.

Eliezer found Rebekah with her brother Laban on that trip and brought Rebekah back. Then the Scripture says one of the most profound things that can be found on the subject of marriage. Just as Eliezer and Rebekah returned, Rebekah put on a veil to meet Isaac (she was not wearing a veil earlier). The Scripture continues.

And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death. -- Genesis 24: 67

Wait a minute. Look at the sequence again. He took her, he married her, he loved her, and he was comforted by her. That's backwards! Don't we first meet someone, feel comfortable with them, even friendly? Then we fall in love, get married, and the last thing we do is take her.

But the Scripture says Isaac did the opposite. What is this all about? And why did the Scripture state that Rebekah put on a veil just before this? What does the veil have to do with marriage?

The Scripture has actually shown us how men approach marriage and how women approach marriage, and how they are different.

Ladies, this is a truth. Let my words serve as confirmation. Men approach marriage from the idea of sex and physical attraction first. Men go through the courtship, the ceremony, and the tuxedo, so they can have sex with the woman. About six months after they get married, they wake up one morning, see their wife laying there and it hits them. “What have I done!?! I’m married!!??!” That’s when they actually get married. Then... they make up their minds to truly love their wives some time after that. It could be several years before they really “get it” on that concept. Then, they understand that their wife is better than their mother.

Wives on the other hand see marriage the other way. First, they are comforted, they fall in love, they put on a veil for marriage, get married, and then have sex last. Modesty and discretion are the hallmarks of her relationship. The veil is the symbol of her modesty at the wedding.

As a jewel of gold in a swine’s snout, so is a fair woman which is without discretion.

-- Proverbs 11: 22

Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised.

-- Proverbs 31: 30

Let me illustrate how succinctly this process works in the mind of a man and differently in a woman. The subject is “*fantasy*.” When a man *fantasizes* about a woman, it is about sex and how he takes her. When a woman *fantasizes* about a man, it is about how safe she feels with him, how he holds her and makes her feel comfortable. It’s about being friends and maybe him telling her how he loves her by presenting her with some flowers. Men and women think differently on this subject.

This brings me to one of the most important things about marriage that men and women need to know and understand. Gentlemen! Women do the opposite of what you think should be done many times. A man will count to 10 beginning with 1 and sequentially progress to 10. A woman will get to 10 but will do it a different way, sometimes different every time. For example, a woman will count to ten as follows: 3, 7, 5, 1, 2, 8, 9, 6, 4, and 10. Men get very confused with this process. It, however, makes perfect sense to a woman (and other women will agree with her).

I want to offer some real caution here to all husbands. *Don't make a big deal out of the different way women count to 10.* Remember we men are the ones who put sex in front of everything, right? And, we want it that way, right? We would be wise to just leave things the way they are. Actually, it really does work out for the best. Remember, how Isaac met Rebekah? He took her, he married her, he loved her, and he was comforted? Let the husband pursue the process from the *take* side and let the wife pursue it from the *comfort* side. As a result, they will both end up with the two middle ingredients together – love and marriage.

Lessons from our Biblical fathers and mothers...

What Jacob and his Wives Teach Us about Marriage

The closest example you are going to find in the Bible of a man with multiple wives is Jacob and his wives Leah and Rachel. One thing can be concluded from the entire experience: if you want conflict in your life, then have multiple spouses. If you want any *chance* of peace in your house, then stick with one spouse.

But there is something else that Jacob had in his marriage that comes out in Scripture in a unique way. Have you ever considered how Jacob fulfilled his duties as husband of multiple wives? In particular, did they live in one big happy tent, or was there a designated place where intimacy was done? This question is worthy of an answer because it has one of the most important points concerning a happy home and marriage.

The fact is that each wife had her own tent. Jacob would go into which ever tent he chose or was told to go to, but something else would go with him. Jacob had a couch. Actually, it was really his bed. It was where he performed his husbandly duties with his wife.

One of the most important lessons for a happy home that a husband can learn is that the house (the tent) belongs to the wife. Let her decorate it how she wants. Let her decide where the furniture goes. It is her nest. Let her get as comfortable as she wants there. It is part of her security. Don't mess with the interior of the house; it's hers. But there is one thing in the house that is yours. It is your bed. (It's Jacob's couch.)

Ladies, this is a profound Biblical truth. When you get into your husband's bed, you are in your marriage bed. He is not sleeping with his sister. You are his wife. Therefore, you should not be surprised that your husband's desire is for you. He, as your husband, is obeying the Lord directing all of his desire to you. Do not disrespect him nor discourage him in obeying the Lord.

The Bible is very clear using the word translated as "couch." The Hebrew word for couch when broken down to its individual letters means: where the eye and hand are joined together in desire. This was the reason that Jacob was so angry with his son, Reuben, when he went in and had sex with Leah's handmaid, Zilpah, the mother of Gad and Asher. Jacob expressed his anger at Reuben's blessing.

3: Reuben, thou art my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power: 4: Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel; because thou wentest up to thy father's bed; then defiledst thou it: he went up to my couch. -- Genesis 49

The couch (the marriage bed) of the husband is to be shared by the wife, and this is what is expressed again in the Song of Solomon. *Behold, thou art fair, my beloved, yea, pleasant: also our bed is green.*

-- Canticles 1: 16

If a husband can learn to provide a home for his wife in which she feels secure and the wife can enter her husband's bed respecting him, then they will enjoy the full benefits of a loving marriage. They will produce children that are a joy and have a happy home.

Lessons from our Biblical fathers and mothers...

What Our Heavenly Father Teaches Us about Marriage

The Bible has much to say about marriage and our parents are responsible for most of our teaching to be good husbands and wives. However, there is one last lesson about marriage that is taught by our Heavenly Father. It is the most profound of them all.

The best thing we can do to improve our marriages or to better prepare for marriage is to develop the ability to understand our spouse. We need to dwell with understanding.

Say unto wisdom, Thou art my sister; and call understanding thy kinswoman

-- Proverbs 7: 4

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.

-- Proverbs 9: 10

Through wisdom is an house builded; and by understanding it is established

-- Proverbs 24:3

Being wise and knowledgeable are good things but developing the ability to understand, especially to understand your spouse, is consistent with being intimate, knowing God, and having a well established house called a home.