

[Students of Christian Renewal Bible College, EKB, DMB – May 1994]
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A pastor should encourage a couple intending to get married to give in depth consideration to the following issues, upon which a successful marriage depends. The couple should be prepared to commit themselves to six or eight weekly sessions of honest, open sharing of how to build a relationship that will last.

Consider:

1. **Making** the choice to keep God as No 1 individually, as a family, and to daily read His Word and pray.
2. The need to **maintain communication lines** as a priority at the level of openness, honesty and transparency. Plan to have regular times of sharing and relating together. Refuse to become “too busy” with activities that hinder communication, *1Pet 3:7*.
3. **How to handle conflict** and disagreement without destroying relationship. Agree to avoid attacking, judging, condemning and sarcastic comments and attitudes. Be willing to humble self in free open apology when necessary. Just three words can restore peace: “I was wrong,” “Please forgive me,” “I am sorry,” “I love you,” “Can I help?”
Where there has been a disagreement, do not speak critically of another in front of visitors, friends or family, and not in public. Seek to come to a place of peace about the issue during times of daily discussion and sharing.
4. **Anger as a force** that requires managing. It can be hurtful and destructive. If anger is a problem seek out wise counsel as to how to control it, or better be totally set free, *Jn 8:36, Rom 6:6,11*. It is helpful to realise that anger is a personal reaction and that nobody “made me angry.” Focus your anger on the issue that is the “problem” not the person concerned.
5. **Companionship is essential** in a normal happy marriage. Spend time doing things together. Where one marriage partner becomes involved, in a major way in sport, club or hobby activity of some sort, and has little time for companionship, the marriage relationship comes under severe strain. Discuss involvement in various interests that will hinder companionship in a significant way.
6. **Men view marriage differently**. Christian women usually enter marriage with a strong desire to give themselves wholly to their husband. They find their fulfilment in marriage, family and home whereas the husband, though greatly desiring marriage, has other major goals and interests, such as job, career through which he plans to provide for his wife and family. For this reason a woman has to know that she is No 1 in her husband’s list of priorities, and the husband needs to recognise that it his responsibility to ensure that this is in fact the case.
7. **God’s order in marriage**. The Word of God clearly states that the husband is to be the leader in the family, *1Cor 11:3, Eph 5:22-31*. The husband and wife talk over issues and pray together for the mind of God to be revealed. Where there is disagreement, wait. Keep praying. Choose God’s will. Surrender personal desires to God. He will show you His way, *Jn 7:17, Pro 3:5,6, Jam 1:5, Pro 16:3,AMPV, Jn 14:26, Jn 16:13*. Once the will of God is decided upon the husband is responsible to lead his family in the way of the Lord, *Gen 18:19*. Man and woman are equal before God in all blessing and redemptive grace but in

family life God has set an order. (Other God ordained orders: government/citizen, church elder/church member, parent/child, employer/employee. *Rom 13:1-7, 1Thes 5:12, Heb 13:7, Eph 6:1, Col 3:22*)

The **three members of the Godhead are co-equal** in all aspects of divinity but in their functioning in the redemption of creation, the Son submits to the Father and the Holy Spirit submits to the Son, *Jn 6:38, Jn 16:13,14*. True leadership is “servant-leadership” as demonstrated by Christ to His disciples and explained in the following passages: *Mat 20:25-28, Lk 22:25-27, Jn 13:1-15, Phil 2:5-7*. In his leadership role the husband/father is to serve his family as he leads them in the ways of God.

8. **Roles in marriage.** The man’s role is to be the leader, provider protector and is responsible to bring his wife and family to full spiritual maturity. *Eph 6:4, Eph 5:26-29, 1Tim 5:8, 1Thes 3:10*. The Word commands husbands to love their wives and always do them good, *Eph 5:26, Col 3:19, 1Pet 3:7*.
The woman’s role is to be helper, inspirer, follower, keeper of the home and mother of the children, *Pro 14:1, 1Tim 5:14, Pro 31:10-31, Tit 2:4,5*. As *Pro 31:16,20,24,26*, indicate, the faithful wife may have many other spheres of activity. **The woman is the heart** of the home, *Ps 128:3*, whereas **the man is the head**. Both are necessary. The woman is more tender emotionally and binds the family together around her. She thinks with her heart more than the man. The man is more cognitive, reasons with his mind, and is not so emotionally sensitive. The man should recognise these differences and make every effort to be tender, gentle and kind towards his wife, *1Pet 3:7*.
9. The Bible says that the home is the woman’s area of responsibility and authority and so it is unwise for a man to try and change things around as he pleases. *Tit 2:5, Ps 128:3, Pro 14:1, 1Tim 5:14*.
10. **The issue of children.** Children are God’s blessing upon a marriage, *Ps 127:3-5, Ps 128:3,4*. Is there a desire for children? Consider the use of contraceptives. Is there agreement here? Attitudes to child discipline can be shared against a background of some Biblical references, *Pro 22:6, Pro 13:24, Eph 6:1-4*.
11. That the woman may be better qualified than the man to earn a living. Who is going to be the **provider** and the **home-maker**?
12. **The area of sexual relationship.** Agree not to force sexual behaviour on the other that offends and recognise that true love seeks to meet the needs of another before self, *Gal 5:13*. Remember that it is important to your spouse how you treat other members of the opposite sex. Do not show affection to others that should be kept for your spouse.
13. **Attitudes to money.** Some people like to spend what they have while others like to save as much as possible. Discuss the use of the credit card and how to avoid going into debt.
14. That the Word says that a man is to **leave** his father and mother, **cleave** to his wife and they shall be one flesh, *Gen 2:24,25*. This means severance from parental control, permanence of relationship, and intimate unity in marriage. *1Cor 11:3* speaks of a new order of things when a couple marry and implies that the authority of the parents over the married couple has come to an end.