

***Family Conference***  
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***San Diego, California***

***Problem Areas in the Marriage Relationship***

***“Revival in the Home Influences Revival in the Church”***

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**Opening Thoughts**

Over the years in our marriage counseling ministry, we have discovered and catalogued a plethora of issues and problem areas that seem to be quite common in the day and age in which we live. Sadly, our culture and society have had far more influence on our marriages and our family relationship than has the Word of God. Because this is true, we have been faced with some pretty challenging counseling situations that took many long months to properly and biblically address. The following material has been compiled to address some of the problem areas that we have found common in Christian marriages today.

**Looking at Some Common Problem Areas**

- (1) Husbands and wives failing to submit themselves to one another in the fear of God.

***“Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God” (Ephesians 5:21).***

- (2) Wives failing to submit themselves to the headship of their husbands.

***“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing” (Ephesians 5:22-24).***

- (3) Husbands failing to love their wives with a sacrificial love that places the best interests and needs of their wives above their own, as well as all others.

***“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth***

***himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband” (Ephesians 5:25-33).***

- (4) A lack of effective communication (careful listening that brings about an effective and loving response).
- (5) A lack of deep and abiding trust and a mutual respect for one another (truth, openness, and honesty).

***“Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds” (Colossians 3:9).***

- (6) Failure to keep the marriage relationship honest and transparent – keeping secrets from one another – being deceptive – hiding transgressions and sinful behaviors that affect the relationship – a failure to seek forgiveness when one’s mate has been betrayed by some sinful conduct – failing to confess sin and seek forgiveness, etc. A marriage where secrets are kept from one another is doomed to failure.

***“Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (James 5:16).***

- (7) A failure to be sensitive and considerate of one another’s thoughts, feelings, needs, and concerns. Self-centeredness and selfishness do much damage in the marriage relationship.

***“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:5-8).***

- (8) A failure to make time to communicate and share thoughts, dreams, desires, goals, plans, and hopes.
- (9) A failure to make decisions together, both minor and major.
- (10) A failure to set aside time to engage in meaningful spiritual fellowship together, talking about the Word of God with one another, sharing what the Lord has spoken to our hearts about in our own devotions, encouraging one another in

the Word, praying together, seeking the Lord together, and rejoicing in the things that God has done for us.

(11) There is always a major problem when relationships outside of the marriage relationship take priority, or become more important than the relationship between husband and wife. Husbands and wives ought always to be one another's best friends, and all other relationships secondary. ***Beware of developing any close relationship or emotional attachment to anyone of the opposite sex outside of your marriage. Many a man and many a woman have been guilty of emotional adultery when they allow themselves to develop an inappropriate relationship outside of the marriage bonds. Sadly, when a spouse is not having their needs met at home, the devil will exploit that situation and set them up by bringing along someone whom they think will meet that need. It may start out as an innocent relationship, but can develop into an emotional relationship, then an affectionate relationship, often leading to a physical relationship. Beware!***

(12) There is a danger of having wrong or imbalanced priorities. Allowing work, hobbies, outside interests, and even ministry endeavors to encroach upon the marriage relationship can be very dangerous. We have seen this as very problematic in marriage counseling over the years, and great care must be taken to allow nothing to interfere with good balance. When mates spend too much time away from one another, this can lead to the establishment of unscriptural independence whereby it is not uncommon for husbands and/or wives to develop separate lives, separate interests, and separate relationships. When mates spend too much time apart, they will eventually drift apart and the marriage can then be in jeopardy. ***(Use the career Navy experience as an example)***

(13) A major problem that can develop in a marriage relationship is to make children the center of everything that goes on in the home. Marriage suffers when everything revolves around children. It is unhealthy when a husband allows his children to literally come between him and his wife. A man is not one with his children, but is one with his wife. Children come second to his relationship with her and her relationship with him. To be sure, our children need, must have, and deserve our loving attention, time, and guidance. But staying on balance is imperative, and the marriage will suffer if we do not realize this.

(14) A failure to make time and take time for intimacy is problematic. Marital love is not built upon the physical alone, but it is a very important part of the marriage relationship and should not be ignored.

***“Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye***

***may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency” (1 Corinthians 7:3-5).***

- (15) Spousal abuse takes many forms. It is not always and only physical, but can be mental, psychological, and emotional. Verbal abuse is very damaging, and ought not ever be allowed in the marriage relationship. But verbal abuse is very common in marriage, even amongst God’s people.

### **Other Common Problem Areas**

- (1) ***The way leisure time is spent.*** Do you set aside a regular time each week just to be together or engage in fun activities? Do you cultivate common interests and hobbies?
- (2) ***How money is managed.*** Have you worked together to set up a reasonable budget? Are you violating scriptural principles relating to finances such as borrowing without sufficient ability to repay, or neglecting to set aside a tithe, etc.? Financial irresponsibility is one of the major contributing factors to marital strain and breakdown.
- (3) ***Developing mutual friendships.*** Are you cultivating new friendships that center in your church life? Are your primary friends godly Christian people who encourage your walk with the Lord as a couple?
- (4) ***Indulgence in bad habits.*** Have you consulted your pastor regarding life-dominating habits? Are you conscious of how any bad habit or life-dominating sin will affect your spouse your marriage relationship?
- (5) ***Unsatisfactory quality/quantity of affection (spoken and demonstrated).***
- (6) ***Family and in-laws.*** Your marriage and your relationship with your spouse can be very problematic if you do not accept and love your in-laws and other mutual family members. Family feuds are death on a marriage, and will always drive a wedge between a husband and wife.
- (7) ***Disagreement over individual responsibilities.***
- (8) ***Spiritual goals.*** If a husband and wife are not on the same page spiritually, walking with the Lord in holy consonance, equally yoked together for the cause of Christ, there are bound to be problems. (Aquila and Priscilla – example)