



Marriage is an institution ordained of God. It provides the innate need for intimacy, compassion, pleasure, and security. Marriage is a critical bedrock element of society. Yet, the rate of marriage failure is so high that people entering into it are subject to significant disappointment in their expectations marriage is designed to provide.

Marriage is a sacred institution in which many positive things must come together to build it so the gates of hell will not prevail against it. As Jesus said, ...” upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail” ... All of these positives are designed to strengthen and hold the marriage together.

When they do not come together, the result is normally degradation and dissolution of marriage. Some researchers and writers have reported as high as 40 to 50% of marriages in the United States end in dissolution. Recent US Center for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention data shows 827,261 divorces from 2,245,404 marriages (45 reporting States and D.C.). The CDC records this divorce rate of 3.2 per 1,000 population. Percentage wise, this equates to 37% of marriages in that data set ending in divorce.

This should sound a loud alarm to those prospecting marriage, as well as those currently experiencing success in marriage. Various bodies of research inform us of varying causes of divorce, from which we have a good statistical, sociological, and whole-world view of those things that lead to marriage degradation and dissolution. What is seemingly bad luck with marriage can be avoided by identifying prominent destroyers of marriage and ap-

plying simple, practical biblical principles. “BAD LUCK” is a good way to remember some of those prominent principles to help you avoid destroyers of marriage. Let’s take a look at this seemingly BAD LUCK through the Badgering, Abuse, Dollar, Lack of Good Communication, Unrealistic Expectations, Control, and Knowledge principles offered for your blessing.



## Badgering

To badger your mate is to what? It is to persistently harass them, pester them, hound them, bait them, repeatedly irritate them to do something. Checkout distaste for this type of behavior as shown in scripture:

But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God. 1 Cor 11:16

It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry woman. Proverbs 21:19

A continual dropping in a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike. Proverbs 27:15

As coals are to burning coals, and wood to fire; so is a contentious man to kindle strife. Proverbs 26:21

It is better to dwell in the corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman and in a wide house. Proverbs 25:24

These scriptures also depict what it is like to be around or live with a person displaying such behavior. They are fond of contention and it is a constant with them. They dwell in angry debate, provoking dispute or contention so they can quarrel. If you find that your marriage is characterized with constant arguing and impugning speech, then your marriage is possibly on the road to dissolution.



## Abuse

Abuse can apply in such wide aspects of behavior and can be as subtle as from not taking responsibility for your actions but deflecting the blame to your spouse, to striking your spouse in the face. Because abuse is so broad it is one of the most evasive to ward off degradation to marriage. Abuse in marriage commonly rears its ugly head by verbal expression, physical maltreatment, emotional maltreatment, misuse, and exploitation.

The following questions can help serve as a barometer to help you determine if abuse is occurring in your marriage:

1. Do you find that you or your spouse use vilifying, harsh, insulting, condemning, intemperate, or angry language towards each other?
2. Are you experiencing physical striking or being struck, or violence of any type?
3. Is natural care for wellbeing beyond care, but rather unhealthy control? It is natural to want to know that your spouse is safe at school, work, recreation, etc. It is unnatural and unhealthy to expect your spouse to account for genuine, as a matter of course, reasonable time away from your presence. To do otherwise may indicate emotional maltreatment manifested through control rather than the exercise of natural care.
4. Is your relationship characterized with fear, accusation you can not do anything right, or behavior you're ashamed for others to see?

## Dollar

The dollar, salary, money, financial security, livelihood, income, or whichever term best suits the situation is one of the top reasons for marriage degradation and dissolution.

There is no shortage of credible research and personal observation that bears this out. Research shows that money was a major contributing factor in approximately 43 percent of marriages ending in divorce. Yes, money or financial security is extremely important to marriage. It is so important that US Federal Reserve Banks consider marriage during economic policy development.

Of course, prior to current research, the Bible explained the problem that money can have on relationships centuries ago. In surveying some of the principles the Bible says about money, we can see a clear connection to our values and a clear connection to contentment with money. Our values drive our money behaviors. An adjustment to our values with biblical principles could mean finding contentment with money and make the difference between marital bliss and marital bust. Let us review some of those principles that can drive our values and behaviors.



For starters, let us explore contentment. What is contentment? A contemporary dictionary will give you a definition something like: A mental or emotional state of ease, satisfaction with your situation. Strong's Greek Dictionary of the Bible expresses contentment as sufficiency for one's self; strong enough or possessing enough to need no aid or support; independent of external circumstances; contented with one's lot, with one's means, though the slenderest.

These definitions are not wholly different. In the Bible however, contentment is defined in a real life, deep state of spirituality, which is needed for the soul to truly anchor contentment in one's life. A glimpse of the Apostle Paul shows us this: "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." This is found in Philippians 4:11.



The apostle Paul was intimately acquainted with discomfort in life and doing without. He recounts in 2 Corinthians 11:23-28 his greater labors; imprisonments; being beaten with rods and whip, often leaving him near death; stoned; perils from shipwreck and rivers. He not only experienced dangers from robbers and heathen but also from his own people. Whether he was in the wilderness or the city he found himself in danger; in weariness and painfulness, sleepless nights; hunger, thirst and fastings; and in cold and nakedness.

Yet he knew how to be content. He said, "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." (Philippians 4:12-13). Paul learned true contentment.

Without true contentment, the little we have will never be enough and the great abundance we have will always be too little. Earnings are increasing very slowly and nearly half of American families spend all, or more than their household income. The rich also have money concerns. USB Investor Watch in its publication "When is enough...enough?" describes why rich people continues to strive for riches, among which—"an ever-present fear of losing it all".

Whether we have a little or a lot, we must learn to balance between the two if we are to have contentment. Biblical instruction tells us:

He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity. (Ecclesiastes 5:10)



He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent maketh rich. (Proverbs 10:4)

What is the balance? Both of these sayings come from the richest man who has possibly ever lived—King Solomon. Every year he received over twenty-five tons of gold, taxes from traders and merchants, and additional silver and gold from kings and governors.

Yet, he shared from his wisdom of it all: He that loves it will not be satisfied with it. Inversely, he shares that he who is lazy, he who does not take personal responsibility for his own life (dealeth with a slack hand) will become poor. While the Bible condemns the love of money and warns of the consequences of it, it also condemns laziness and warns of its consequences.

The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof. That which it produces is there to sustain us. All of our goods come from the earth.

To love money is to chart our lives to the over accumulation of those goods (converted to currency), which if we can have enough of we think we will be happy. But as King Solomon said, this is vanity or meaningless. Accumulation to hoard is simply vanity, for money simply



cannot satisfy the soul's need for contentment. As Jesus said, "... a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." (Lu. 12:15)

The other extreme is to not take responsibility enough to gather those goods and responsibly use them for self-sustainment and greater good. Those not taking this critical responsibility is pointed to the ant for an example: Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, Provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest. (Proverbs 6: 6-8)

How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man. (Proverbs 6: 9-11)



Contentment with money is not to love it but on the other hand take responsibility enough to obtain what is needed.

Loving and hoarding money does not satisfy but cause unfounded anxieties and self-inflicted problems. Not taking responsibility enough to obtain what is needed crafts poverty and desperation— "as an armed man".

Three simple principles for Money Contentment:

1. Do I really need it?
2. Can I afford it?
3. Am I obtaining it honestly?

When goods increase, they are increased that eat them: and what good is there to the owners thereof, saving the beholding of them with their eyes? (Ecclesiastes 5:11).

Avoid the trap of just having to have it because it is there to be had, it is new, the latest advances in technology, the prettiest there is. Things we can consume with our money will always increase and always change. Ask yourself, do I really need it? Do I really need it now? Can I apply my money to better use? What is the best applied value? Eventually the new becomes old and that which is cutting edge today more than likely will not be tomorrow.

For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? (Luke 14:28). Before you start, ask yourself, can I afford it? Plan ahead for your needs and chart a sensible course on how to meet them.



We are not to take for granted we will be here tomorrow. However, if we are here we will have needs. It is biblical principle to plan ahead. Planning ahead prevents impulsive spending decisions. It prevents things like buying a car only to have it repossessed, buying a house just to have it foreclosed on, starting your dream venture just to run out of money in the process and lose what you invested.

Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished: but he that gathereth by labour shall increase. (Proverbs 13:11). Ask yourself, am I obtaining it honestly? Money is not to be obtained by unsatisfactory means—but must be labored for. Those who are impatient in obtaining what is needed or attempt short cuts to obtain large sums quickly often fall to the temptation of obtaining it dishonestly. It will not last. Generally, get rich quick schemes do not work.



Generally, contentment little by little, through labor. Spend less than you earn and invest the rest. The amount you gather may be in little increments, but if you use it responsibly and incrementally invest a little of the little you gather, it will grow and you will find contentment.

While gathering, remember Joseph's wisdom in Genesis 41: 34-36 when gathering food for Egypt in preparation for an upcoming famine. He gathered a fifth of Egypt's harvest for seven years and held it in reserve and used it during the famine. Make it a priority to set aside at least a little of what you earn.

## Lack of Good Communication

What is communication? It is imparting and exchanging information. Even more importantly in marriage, it is the successful imparting and exchanging of information, feelings and ideas. Some rank the lack of communication as the number one cause of divorce. Whether number 1 or 100, if you do not have good communication in your marriage you are going to have a rough go at it and may very well end up in divorce. If positive communication habits are enforced, negative communication habits will be forced out. The Bible contains myriad instruction for good communications. Take a look at some instruction on communication:

**Be a good listener** -- Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: (James 1:19). He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him. (Proverbs 18:13). In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise. (Proverbs 10:19).

**Use positive, thoughtful speech** -- Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. (Ephesians 4:29).

**Use gentle speech** -- A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger. (Proverbs 15:1).

**Guard your speech** -- Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips. (Psalms 141:3).

**Gauge your speech** -- The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright: but the mouth of

fools poureth out foolishness. (Proverbs 15:2) A fool hath no delight in understanding, but that his heart may discover itself. (Proverbs 18:2). But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. (Matthew 15:18).

Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer. (Psalms 19:14).



**Use healing words** -- There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword: but the tongue of the wise is health. (Proverbs 12:18). Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof. (Proverbs 18:21). Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones. (Proverbs 16:24).

**Know how to answer** -- Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man. (Colossians 4:6). The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips. (Proverbs 16:23). The heart of the righteous studieth to answer: but the mouth of the wicked poureth out evil things. (Proverbs 15:28). Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words? there is more hope of a fool than of him. (Proverbs 29:20).

**Know the value of your speech** -- A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver. (Proverbs 25:11).

## Unrealistic Expectations

Husbands and wives are to have expectations of each other. There should be expectation for a relationship free of infidelity. There should be expectation for love, care, empathy, sympathy, and support. There should be expectation for financial responsibility and good stewardship. These and more are realistic expectations. Unrealistic expectations come from a failure to understand several basic things, three of which we will discuss:

1. **Your mate is not capable of perfection and will make mistakes—sometimes bad ones.** In the beginning Adam and Eve were perfect mates, as they were perfect beings, but that is no more because sin came and ushered in imperfection—thus a broken world. We live in an imperfect, broken world with imperfect, broken people, to include our mates. As well intended as we are when entering into marriage to meet every good expectation, we will be unrealistic in our expectations if we do not understand our marriages are in an environment not functioning as initially designed. You will have daily struggles with marriage on some level, if for no other reason, your marriage is unbalanced by the implements of a broken world. You should expect love, care, empathy, sympathy, support, and stewardship of your mate. However, it would be unrealistic to expect all will go well and it will be easy. Be encouraged, God will give you the strength to endure when all does not go well.

2. **Your mate will always do those things done and be the person they were when you entered into marriage.** A favorite phrase mates use against each other is “you have changed.” Other common phrases are “you use to.....” “Why don’t you do.....any more?” It should be no news flash when you look up one day and your mate has changed. That young 24-36-24 physique is no longer recognizable. The only recognizable feature is weight gain. The smooth, beautifully tanned skin is now faded, pale, and wrinkled. That superman who kept the car immaculately shiny and clean, kept the lawn so nicely manicured and green is now struggling to walk. That superwoman who kept the kids so well-mannered, tidy, and balanced in life now struggles to keep her own-self on balance. Try to remember you both will gradually change and you must work and pray your way through the changes to the betterment of the marriage.



3. **Your needs are greater than your mate’s.** This is an unrealistic expectation. This is often played out in the emotional and physical gratification arenas. It is unreasonable for the wife to expect her husband to meet all of her emotional needs. She must look to God to satisfy her emotional needs. Her husband will break down under the weight of her every emotional need. Also, it is a myth that husband does not have emotional needs. Wife cannot expect husband not to have emotional needs that need attending to. Yes, men have high libidos and are straightforward in their eagerness for sex; however, this does not mean men have a greater need for sex in the relationship than women. The need for sex with women is just in different context. Sexual desire in women has stronger connection to emotional, communal, and societal values.

"Libido in women is more effected by environment and circumstances. That is okay, God created men and women biologically different. Given these differences it is unreasonable for husband to expect wife to be as eager as he his every time the subject comes up. The way forward is to learn how to balance what the Bible instructs: "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 7:5)

## Control

Who is in charge? Who gets to make the final decisions? Who is head of household? Who is ruler of household? You must be aware of the struggle for control in the marriage.



Although created after man in the order of creation, the woman was not created less than man, nor subservient to man. She was created for her own specific and unique role. We must remember that roles are important in relationships. Having one's own distinct role does not make one less important in the relationship. We see this in the Holy Trinity, or the God Head—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. In Genesis 1:26-28 God decreed to make man after his own image and likeness, give them dominion over all the earth, and created them male and female. God created both male and female after his own image and likeness and gave both dominion over all the earth.

Let us review history recorded in Genesis Chapters 2 and 3. In Genesis Chapter 2, God creates the woman and assigns a specific role to her in relation to the man. He assigns the role of an "help meet" for the man (Genesis 2:18). The words help meet are translated from the Hebrew words ezer (helper) and kenegedo (like, of him of his, to be face to face). To be face to face is to converse, discuss, pass information, commune together. In simplistic expression the words help meet means a helper who is like him, but opposite to him in role and attribute. The woman was not servant to the man, unequal to the man, nor assigned a lesser responsible role in the relationship. The woman by order of nature was to be the helper of the man carrying out her unique, divinely appointed responsibility of faithful assistance to man, and both together in Godly harmony and mutual consent carry out the purposes of God. In Genesis Chapter 3 after the woman and her husband partook of the fruit of knowledge of good and evil, which they were forbidden to do, as part of the judgment pronounced upon the woman for the transgression, God said to her "and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." (Genesis 3:16)

This is hard to digest, as now comes a shift in the relationship between the man and the woman—the husband and the wife. Prior to the transgression, God assigned the wife as a help to the husband. Her vocation was to help. She was created as a companion and an associate to the man, to assist him to live well. Now God pronounces "and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." The meaning of "and he shall rule" is from the Hebrew mashal (maw-shal'), to rule, have dominion, govern, reign. What happens when one imperfect person tries to control the next imperfect person?

There is resistance to be controlled. Are you getting the picture? There is a struggle for control. Unlike the perfect conditions and perfect relationship in the Garden of Eden prior to the transgression, the relationship is now characterized with disharmony and a struggle for control.

From the beginning the wife's relation to the husband was to be a help meet. This divinely-established role was not severed but was disrupted with the wife's (Eve) taking fruit and eating it from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, as well as giving it to the husband (Adam) to eat, which led to the fall (sin in the human race). Because of her actions God also assigned her to a subordinate role in the relationship when he told her "and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee."

Reading through the Old Testament and Hebrew culture one can clearly see the subordinate role of the wife in the relationship. This was not a relationship of oppression, and certainly not of abuse and ownership as the wife was treated in certain other ancient cultures. With the advent of Christianity in the New Testament, the wife's role remains subordinate in the relationship and God gives us greater insight into how the husband and the wife is to love each other and work harmoniously in the relationship.

Ephesians Chapter 5 reveals:

1. The wife is to submit herself unto her own husband, as unto the Lord.
2. The husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the church.

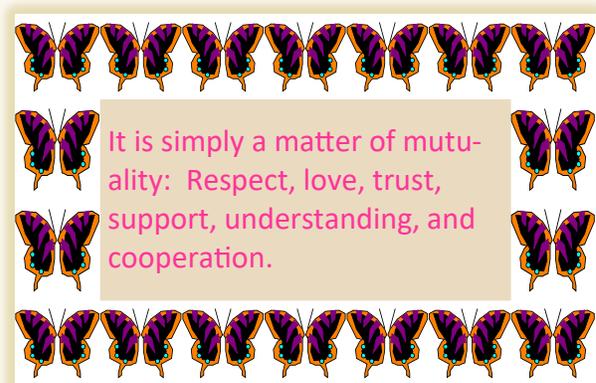
3. As the church is subject unto Christ, wives should be subject to their own husbands in everything.

4. The husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church and died for it.

5. The husband is to love his wife as he loves his own body. When he loves his wife, he loves himself.

6. Every husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church and as the husband loves himself; and the wife is to reverence her husband.

The husband's role is very clear. Something else is also very clear, and that is, the wife's authority in the household. 1 Timothy 5:14 tells us: "I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully." The word guide comes from the Greek word "oikodespoteō" (oy-kod-es-pot-eh'-o) meaning to be the head of a family, guide the house, rule a household, manage family affairs.



To be clear about it, men would not exist beyond Adam were it not for women. Men would not accomplish the things accomplished under the banner of their households were it not for women. Why is that?

Simple—while man is head of household, woman is ruler of household. She directs the success of household. Both husband and wife are assigned divinely appointed roles in the relationship and both must submit and commit to each other in their roles to realize the love and harmony of relationship God intends.

## Knowledge

We are given a universal truth in Hosea 4:6—"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge..." It is often said that raising children and nurturing marriages do not come with instruction manuals. Although the saying is true, instruction is available in God's word and we must make ourselves knowledgeable of that instruction if we are to have healthy harmonious marriages. While the principles offered in the information on badgering, abuse, dollars, lack of communication, unrealistic expectations, and control are not put forth as an instruction manual on marriage, they contain the type of knowledge to be pursued to effect healthy harmonious marriages. Proverbs 3:1-13 instructs us in the pursuit of this knowledge and gives us God's promises of great fulfillment when we pursue and follow it.



Proverbs 3:1-13:

1 My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments:

2 For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee.

3 Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart:

4 So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man.

5 Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

7 Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the Lord, and depart from evil.

8 It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones.

9 Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase:

10 So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.

11 My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord; neither be weary of his correction:

12 For whom the Lord loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.

13 Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding.

## Prayer

Father help us to not forget your knowledge and keep it in our hearts. Let your knowledge add length of days, long life, and peace to our marriage. Write mercy and truth on our hearts and help us exercise them in our marriage and in doing so bless us with favour and good understanding in your sight and the sight of each other. Help us trust in you with all our hearts and lean on your knowledge. Help us acknowledge you in all of our ways, and in doing so direct the paths of our marriage. Help us follow your wisdom and not our own. Help us reverence you and not allow evil to be part of our marriage. Let your wisdom, our reverence of you, and rejection of evil in our marriage be health to the navel and marrow to the bone of our marriage. Help us honour you with our substance, firstfruits, and increase. In doing so, fill our marriage with plenty and the strength of newness. Fill our lives with strength and bursting power like new wine. Bless us with the happiness that comes only from your wisdom and understanding. Amen.



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