

Family Upreach, Inc.

Course V: *Christian Marriage Skills*

"Keeping Your Marriage Christian"

Lesson Twelve

The Christian Marriage

KEEPING YOUR MARRIAGE CHRISTIAN

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Unit 20 – Lesson 3

(NewLife Behavior English Edition)

NewLife 
B E H A V I O R
Ministries

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"If any person be in Christ, he is a new creature . . ."
(Second Corinthians 5:17)

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RESPONSE SHEET

Dear Student,

We have found that thoughtful *written* responses greatly enhance the student's understanding of this course material. Therefore, we urge you to use this **Response Sheet** as an aid in the study of this lesson.



STEP 1: BEFORE YOU START

Before you start, please write three or four sentences below on what you are currently doing to keep Christian character in your marriage. Then, put this sheet out of sight until you finish the lesson.

STEP 2: PREPARING TO STUDY

Read the Study Questions on pages 11-12 (do not attempt to answer them now). Then read and study pages 3-10 as you would a chapter of a book.

KEEPING YOUR MARRIAGE CHRISTIAN

In this lesson we will look at various suggestions to help you make your marriage all that our Lord expects. We believe that God instituted marriage and that it will flourish when we follow His design for it.

Before continuing, write your definition of commitment and perhaps a word or two about the steps you are currently taking to maintain Christian character in your marriage (using the Response Sheet section on Page 2). Then put it out of your sight until the end of this lesson. Read the entire lesson through once without looking up the scriptures. Finally, go back for a more in-depth study before completing the Study Questions on Pages 11-12.

I. Introduction

It is true that multiplied billions have lived and died over the centuries. Many of the deceased were married. They may have been faithful to one spouse their entire lives. Yet, they were not even distantly related (in a *spiritual way*) to the God of the Bible and His Son, Jesus Christ. They never knew there was a better way.

In the same way, untold billions have never known or experienced any mode of transportation other than walking – never aware of an automobile or commercial jet airliner. In transportation (as in marriage), who would not choose a “better way” if they knew of it?

God created the first marriage in the Garden of Eden (Genesis, Chapters 2 through 5). In His estimation, all of God’s creations were “very good”.

This being true, it behooves all people to seek direction from God’s revealed will (the Bible) in order to construct the *very best marriage possible*.

The Bible is primarily for the salvation of man’s soul and eternal fellowship with God. But, God has also included information that will make us the happiest in this earthly existence – that is, through a Christian marriage. Jesus said that one of the reasons He came to this earth was “that they [His disciples] might have life and have it more

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abundantly” (John 10:10). The *New International Version* (NIV) says: “Have it [life] to the full.” It is our conviction that a more complete life will be found by each couple in a marriage that is truly Christian.

II. Definition

In our opening lesson, we developed a working definition for Christian marriage. We repeat it here to refresh our minds . . .

“Christianity is a way of life, the principles of which must be manifested daily in all of one’s relationships. Jesus Christ must be a reality in the lives of both partners if the marriage is to be Christian. They must seek to develop a general atmosphere of love, understanding, forgiveness and selflessness, characteristics exemplified by Jesus and incorporated in bedrock Christian conduct.

The Christian is commanded in Luke 10:27 and Matthew 22:34-39 to love God with his total being and the neighbor (spouse) as himself. Heart, soul, strength and mind are the dimensions of man’s personality revealing his emotional, spiritual, physical and mental natures. To have a Christian marriage, each person must be committed to Jesus Christ and each must love his mate as himself in these four areas.”

The best place to behave like a Christian is with our marital partner. It seems unnecessary to state the obvious, but how often do we see a person attempting to live a Christian life *everywhere* but at home? Every one of the identified characteristics in our definition contributes to peace, harmony, and cooperation in any relationship – especially the marital one.



I have been impressed by how Paul put together his letters to the Ephesians and Colossians. First, he spells out the glowing description of Jesus and the saved. Then, he follows that with the behaviors that these doctrinal teachings should inspire in each of us. After completing his instruction in proper conduct, Paul addresses the *relationships* where these behaviors need to be applied.

It naturally follows that Christian marriage calls for two Christians *who act like Christians ought to act!* The best and easiest place to be a Christian is with the person that we love the most in this life.

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Additional lists of Christian characteristics can be found in Second Peter 1:5-11 and Galatians 5:22-23. These are worthy of your reading and thoughtful consideration.

III. Christian Compatibility

In Second Corinthians 6:14-15, the Apostle Paul directs . . .

“Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?”

A person cannot be closer yoked with another human being than in the marriage relationship. Paul warns us that such an intimate relationship would be difficult – if not impossible – to manage due to the fundamental differences between them. If you desire communion and accord in the marital relationship, deep thought must be given to *spiritual* compatibility.

Spiritual compatibility, if you have ever enjoyed it, is characterized by a feeling of rightness, of being perfectly synchronized, and finely adjusted to one another. It is especially enjoyed by a couple who possess a shared system of religious beliefs – a shared degree of religious commitment – and a mutual intensity regarding the sovereignty of God in their lives.



Such a condition of compatibility is only gained IF . . . both parties desire it above all. Religious differences need to be examined and noted for what they are. The couple must seek God’s will in a study of the Bible and in prayer. Both must be willing to lay aside any *thing* or any *attitude* that would hinder compatible spiritual growth.

Spiritual compatibility blesses the lives of the married person that pursues it.

1. When a couple possesses a common faith, they get to share a common treasure – that which is most precious to both. Being able to share it together intensifies the enjoyment and helps to draw them into the closeness and intimacy that God intended that they should share.
2. When you share a common faith, spouses are able to build their marriage using a

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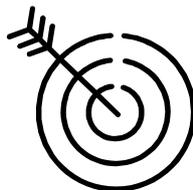
common blueprint. Can you imagine trying to erect a lasting structure with differing specifications for its construction? Being able to determine God's will for your marriage and home – together – contributes to a pathway of peace.

3. When you are spiritually compatible, the adversities of life are shared and shouldered as both partners tap into the power available through prayer and faith. You can lean on each other as each leans on the God they both worship and adore.
4. When you share a common faith, it is easier for you to share in the spiritual training of the *children*. There is no pulling of the child in opposing directions or abandoning spiritual training (as is often done in religiously divided homes). The couple that stands together – united in common faith – lend spiritual *security* to their children and lead them by example as well as verbal instruction.

Some of the forgoing thoughts on Spiritual Compatibility were learned from Bill and Lynne Hybels in their book, Fit To Be Tied (1991).

IV. The Christian Home of the Spiritually Compatible

We all recognize that we are human beings (though we are Christians) and thus, retain our human fallibility – our tendency to foul things up from time to time. It is our aim as God's children to do the best possible job in our marriages and families.



The Bible contains a picture of the ideal on its pages. We strive to match it. You might say that this is the basic nature (method of operation) of the Christian home. This nature is a result of the married relationship of the spiritually compatible.

1. This home should be characterized by unity. Jesus states that the home divided against itself cannot stand (Matthew 12:25). The Psalmist sings of how “blessed” it is when brethren dwell together in unity (Psalm 133:1). The home needs to be presided over by a Christian couple who stands together in Christ. We need to remember that a home is “Christian” because of the husband and wife – not the children.

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2. The Christian home should be noted for its piety. “Piety” is defined as an “amalgam of reverence toward God, devotion to spiritual concerns, and a dutiful regard for one’s parents or other elders.” An “amalgam” is defined as a *combination, mixture or blend*.

Paul told Timothy that children need to “learn first to show piety [*put their religion into practice, NIV*] toward . . .

- (a) their own family, and
- (b) to requite [*repay, NIV*] their parents;

for this is acceptable in the sight of God” (First Timothy 5:4).

These lessons are best learned by children from *the daily example set by parents*.



3. The Christian home should be characterized by purity in all its members. Paul’s further instruction to Timothy was to . . . “keep thyself pure” (First Timothy 5:22). Nothing so troubles a family as impurity and unfaithfulness on the part of either spouse. “He who troubles his own house will inherit the wind” (Proverbs 11:29). Hosea, the Old Testament prophet, says: “They sow the wind, and reap the whirlwind” (Hosea 8:7). The corrupting power of evil behavior devastates and destroys relationships. There is never a right reason for doing wrong.

There is never a positive result of doing wrong.

4. The Christian home should be founded on love. “Better is a dinner of herbs where love is than a fatted calf with hatred” (Proverbs 15:17). Perhaps the *Golden Rule* (as stated by Jesus in Matthew 7:12) is as good a measure of love as can be generally followed. I am convinced that the *Golden Rule* grew out of the Old Testament’s direction to Israel to love themselves and their neighbors (Leviticus 19:18, 34).

But as followers of Jesus, we are assigned to an even higher standard of loving behavior in John 13:34-35 . . .

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*“A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another;
even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.
By this shall all men know that you are my disciples,
if you have love one to another.”*

Paul picks up on this definition of selfless, self-sacrificing, and loving behavior when he challenged husbands in Ephesians 5:25-26 to . . . “love your wives as Christ loved the church.” If any home is to be stable and enduring, it must have this kind of foundation.

5. The Christian home is where God’s Word is taught. The home has always been the appropriate place for the training of the young. And, the responsibility for the training has always been the role of the parents.



Moses told the Israelites that the lasting quality of Israel as a nation depended on *godly fathers* who would teach their children the Will of God and His ways (Deuteronomy 4:7-9; 6:4-9; 32:45-47). Home security is a “given” if the spiritual leaders – husband and wife – are the instructors.

Educators recommend that we use “teachable moments” (when the curiosity of a child has bubbled forth with one of those “why” questions as a springboard for instruction). Stimulate your child to be curious about the things of God whether they are evident in nature, the family, or in the Book of God.

Parents, do your homework ahead of time and be ready to give an answer (First Peter 3:15). Your child will ask questions you cannot answer. Admit your ignorance and then involve your child as you search together in discovering answers. Bringing the light of God to values in daily living is the most precious of parental responsibilities.

V. Commitments to Consider In the Quest for a Christian Marriage

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We started this lesson with a definition of Christian marriage that requires a good deal of work and devotion if it is to be realized in our relationship. If you desire it intensely, it can be yours to enjoy. Perhaps you have started on numerous occasions to move in a positive direction but stalled out somewhere along the way.

The following are some thoughts for getting things back on track. None of these are easy or “quick fixes”. But, each is necessary if we are going to realize the nearest thing to *heaven on earth* that God allows us – which is a Christian marriage – the vestibule of heaven.

1. Begin by committing your life to Christ in obedience to His gospel. His blood was shed to purchase you from slavery to Satan and cleanse you of all sin. You can read in the Book of Acts and in the letters of the apostles how people responded to God’s grace and you can walk in this way, too. Some strategic signposts in this Bible map include:

Acts 2:5-42

Romans 6:3-7

Colossians 2:9-14

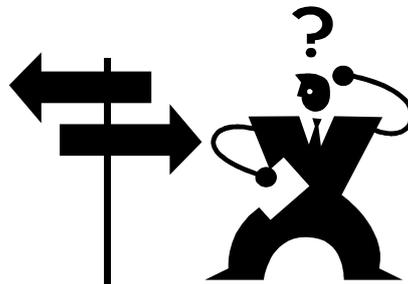
Acts 8:26-40

Romans 6:15-18

First John 1:7-8

Acts 16:19-24

Galatians 3:26-27



It is evident that if you are going to have a Christian marriage, you must become a Christian – be “in” Christ. Making such a move involves a change in us as Paul says in Second Corinthians 5:17 . . .

***If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature (creation),
the old things are passed away; behold,
they are become new***

Give this serious thought and study!

2. Commit your life to the study of the Word of God – the Bible. Paul tells us that it is “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God might be complete, furnished completely unto every good work” (Second Timothy 3:16-17). If you have had trouble trusting in the validity of scripture, read Second Peter 1:12-21. Peter gives you his *eye and ear witness* to the dependability of the scriptures.

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3. Commit yourself to see that your spouse is as valuable a person as you are in that Jesus died for that person just as He died for YOU. John says that Jesus is the satisfaction “for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world” (First John 2:2).
4. Commit yourself to giving your marriage Top Priority in your expenditure of time, energy, thought, and planning. Peter helps us understand that there is no more precious matter on earth than our marital relationship – especially as a Christian (First Peter 3:1-13). Both partners are urged to be devoted fully to this union.
5. Commit yourself to a life of faithfulness to your spouse regardless of all others around you and their behavior. The way of the world is the glorification of promiscuity in direct opposition to teachings of the Bible. See what Paul has to say to you in First Corinthians 6:12-20 and First Thessalonians 4:1-8. Chew on this and digest it!
6. Open yourself to the working of God through His Holy Spirit (through His Word and your obedience) in making you what you ought to be. God wants to renovate you so that you will be in the image of His Son, Jesus Christ (Romans 12:1-2). Are you up to such a rebuilding job? See Romans 8:26-30, Galatians 5:16-26, Second Corinthians 3:12-18 and 4:16-18.
7. Commit yourself to the practice of forgiveness and prayer as main ingredients to secure harmony, strength and peace in your marriage relationship. Read Colossians 3:12-17, Ephesians 6:10-29 (especially verse 18), and Philipians 4:6-7.

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Session #12

STUDY QUESTIONS

Name _____ Date _____

Address _____

1. A Christian marriage is
 - (a) a married couple living in a Christian nation
 - (b) possessing money that says "In God We Trust"
 - (c) following God's plan for man and woman
 - (d) enjoying each other's company

2. In the beginning when God created man
 - (a) He said it was not good for the man to be alone
 - (b) He created a suitable helper
 - (c) He instructed them to produce children
 - (d) All of these

3. God's plan is
 - (a) unreachable
 - (b) impractical
 - (c) perfect
 - (d) impossible

4. The primary concern in marriage is
 - (a) a solid financial foundation
 - (b) good in-laws
 - (c) spiritual compatibility
 - (d) same blood type

5. In order to improve our relationship we will
 - (a) pray
 - (b) go to church
 - (c) read and study God's Word
 - (d) all of these

6. In order to have a Christian home, a husband must
 - (a) demand submission
 - (b) be a Christian leader
 - (c) discourage questions
 - (d) make a good salary

7. Nothing so troubles a family as
 - (a) inadequate transportation
 - (b) lack of health insurance
 - (c) unfaithfulness
 - (d) residing in a low-income neighborhood

8. If you are in Christ
 - (a) old things haunt you
 - (b) new things haunt you
 - (c) old things have passed away
 - (d) old things get older

9. As a *new creature*, you must
 - (a) remain faithful to Christ
 - (b) be faithful to your spouse
 - (c) train your children in the Lord
 - (d) do all of these

10. The *way of the world* is glorification of
 - (a) promiscuity
 - (b) purity
 - (c) holiness
 - (d) angels

REFLECTION

Write a few sentences new ideas you learned about keeping your marriage Christian.

APPLYING THE LESSON

Finally, to get the most from your study, list one or more ideas that you want to use to change your behavior. Also, list questions you want to ask your instructor or studymate.