

Marriage Is For Those Who Love God -- And One Another

THOMAS B. WARREN, PH.D.

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**MARRIAGE IS FOR THOSE WHO LOVE GOD —
AND ONE ANOTHER**

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To Faye, my beloved companion, who has meant so much to me in choosing the direction of my life and in making that life a happy one, and to my three children for whom I wish every happiness in their own marriages, I dedicate this little volume with all my love.

INTRODUCTION

While many fine books have been written on the subject of marriage, most fail to recognize the importance of the spiritual side. This book shows forcefully that the spiritual side of marriage is basic — that “marriage is for those who love God and each other.”

Thomas B. Warren is a graduate of Carrizo Springs, Texas, High School, having finished as valedictorian of his class in 1937. He studied at Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas, graduated from Abilene Christian College in 1947, did graduate work at Southwestern Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, and received the Master of Arts degree from the University of Houston. While working as evangelist for the Eastridge Church of Christ in Fort Worth he is also working toward his doctorate at Texas Christian University. Brother Warren has a wonderful family of his own — his wife, two daughters, and one son. During his many years as a gospel preacher he has devoted much time and study to matters pertaining to marriage and the home. He is exceptionally well-qualified to present the material contained in this volume.

Any study which relates to the home is a study of exceeding great importance. The influence of the social unit called the home extends to and vitally affects the church, the nation, the individual. If the home is as God would have it be marvelous benefits will accrue to the church, to the nation, and to the individual. An ancient proverb holds: “If there be righteousness within the individual there will be happiness within the home; if there be happiness within the home there will be harmony in the nation; if there be harmony in the nation there will

be peace in the world." The home as God would have it will be productive of personal righteousness. We must be intensely concerned about God's laws regarding the home.

The very foundation and continued existence of a home as God wants it to be is the sacred covenant called "marriage." Marriage was divinely instituted, and is subject to divine rule and regulation. God wants (and planned) that the parties to the marriage vows be happy. This happiness is realized if and when the marriage is successful. And, the marriage is successful when governed by the laws of God — resting securely upon a solid spiritual foundation.

In marriage there is a physical aspect, and there is (or must be) a spiritual aspect. It is the spiritual which undergirds the physical. Without this spiritual foundation the marriage is not (and could not be) what God wants it to be. The spiritual foundation will contribute to wonderful physical intimacy, and thus to a successful marriage, which in turn will bring abundant "showers of blessings" upon all concerned.

These are basic points emphatically stressed in the following pages. The author has properly stressed the spiritual side of marriage; he has not failed to stress equally the physical side. In a simple, holy, dignified and beautiful way he has shown the power and value of the physical intimacy between husband and wife. He has shown the tragic consequences of failing to heed the Bible teaching in this regard. He has shown that the Bible deals with these matters and that we have no right to disregard or to fail to teach its message. By failing to teach on these subjects we encourage people to learn erroneously, and from improper sources.

The messages which constitute this book were delivered orally, and were taken from tape recordings. This accounts

for some repetition, but most likely the repetition of fundamental points is an added value.

This book is extremely practical. It deserves (and we predict, will have) a wonderful circulation. It has a vital message for those already married; it ought to be studied carefully by those contemplating marriage. It deserves to be in every home, and will find its way into many classrooms. It will accomplish untold good.

—Roy Deaver

PREFACE

Many books have already been written on the subject of marriage. I hope this little volume makes some contribution to that array of literature. When I began the study which culminated in the book which you now hold in your hands, I had no plans to publish the material, which was first delivered orally.

The elders of the Eastridge Church of Christ, Fort Worth, Texas, a congregation with which I have labored as minister for more than nine years, asked me to speak, in connection with the opening of the new auditorium of the Eastridge church, on the subject of marriage. This was done in a series of five sermons.

As the elders of the Eastridge church and I discussed the need for such a series of sermons, we envisioned the following groups as among those who might benefit from such a study: (1) young people who had never been married but who were looking forward to marriage; (2) young couples who had been married but a short while and still did not know very much about marriage; (3) those who had been married for quite some time but whose marriage was a mediocre affair; (4) those whose marriage was in trouble, with a lot of strife and bitterness; (5) those whose marriage was in great trouble and, therefore, in danger of divorce. The sermons were prepared with these groups in mind.

As the sermons were delivered from night to night, the response by those who heard was indeed most encouraging to me. Before delivering the sermons, I knew that there was a need for such a study, but the delivery of the ser-

mons revealed the fact that there was an even greater need than I had suspected. It was clear to me that the people were hungry for a concentrated series. I had preached on various aspects of marriage before, but there is an added value to a concentrated series, delivered within the span of just three or four days. Many of the people who heard the sermons simply insisted that the sermons be published and put into permanent form so that others might also have access to the material which was set forth in the oral sermons. I had not thought that the sermons were anything unusual, but upon the insistence of so many I decided to undertake the publication of them. The reader must decide for himself as to whether or not that undertaking was a wise one.

Since I firmly believe that God created man in His own image, and since I also firmly believe that marriage is of His appointment, I have tried to explain the meaning and aims of marriage in the light of what I understand the Bible to teach. I have read many other books, but I have ever recognized the Bible to be authoritative in whatever matter it may speak.

While I believe that marriage counselors and physicians may be very helpful, and while I believe they have said and written many good things about marriage relations, I do not believe that people can make of their marriage what they should without being guided by Bible teaching. I believe firmly that the Bible gives the answer to the basic problems which arise in marriage. Therefore, I heartily commend the prayerful study of it to everyone who is planning to be married or who is already married. People who follow its teaching will be successful in their marriage. I also urge the sincere study of the Bible every day for every person. I sincerely hope that all I have said in this book is in harmony with Bible teaching.

Marriage can be a source of great happiness. It can also be a source of great unhappiness. Marriage can be an instrument for great spiritual growth. It can also be an obstacle which stands in the way of spiritual growth.

It is my prayer that the readers of this book may find something which will enable them to live better with one another and to walk closer to God. If this should happen in the case of even one couple, then the publication of this book will have been worthwhile.

I have long been convinced that marriage, in its highest or ideal sense, is for those who truly love God and one another. This conviction led me to preach this series of sermons, and it led to the publication of this book. May the Lord bless the reading of it.

—Thomas B. Warren

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In preparing for the series of sermons which have been printed in this book, I received assistance from a number of sources. My debt to these various sources is large.

My fundamental and authoritative source of material was the Bible, which I firmly believe to be the inspired Word of God. Although I have received help from other sources, I have tried to make every word of this book to be in agreement with the teaching of the Bible. I hope that I have not failed at this point.

Other than the Bible the sources of assistance are rather difficult to pinpoint. Down through the seventeen years that I have served as a minister of the Gospel, I have talked to many people. It is likely true that many thoughts which I now feel are original with me really came from some of these people.

I am certain that I am indebted to other ministers of the Gospel. I have talked with them. I have read their books and articles. I am certain that I have learned from them. They are not to be charged with any faults of this book, but they are to be credited with much of whatever good may be in it.

Many married couples have come to me for help when their marriage did not seem to be what it should be. I am happy and thankful to be able to say that I feel certain that with the help of God I have been able to help a great many. While helping them I have helped myself, I think, to improve as a person and to learn more of God's will in the vital relationship of marriage.

I am also grateful to many of my college and university professors. While it would be difficult, if not impossible, for me to designate at this late date any specific points which they gave me, I know that their assistance to me was great.

Also, I have read many very valuable articles in religious journals and magazines of various sorts. I have also read many books. Following is a list of some which I felt were of value in the preparation of the material which is found in this book: *The Twentieth Century Christian* edited by M. Norvel Young (many articles from this journal); *The Gospel Advocate* edited by B. C. Goodpasture (many articles from this journal); *This Love of Ours* by Leslie R. Smith; *Success in Marriage* by David R. Mace; *Your Marriage—Duel or Duet?* by Louis H. Evans; *The Recovery of Family Life* by Elton and Pauline Trueblood; *Design for Christian Marriage* by D. W. Small; *How to Live 365 Days a Year* by John A. Schindler, M.D.; *The Will to Live* by Arnold A. Hutschnecker, M.D.; *A Woman Doctor Looks at Life and Love* by Marion Hilliard, M.D.; *Sexual Responsibility of Woman* by Maxine Davis; *How to Keep Your Wife Happy* by W. W. Orr; *Mind and Body* by Flanders Dunbar, M.D.; *Neurotic Interaction in Marriage* edited by Victor W. Eisenstein, M.D.; *The Christian Home* by P. D. Wilmeth (this book was used as the study guide for a class taught by the author of this volume); *Six Talks on Family Living* by Henry R. Brandt; *The Way* by E. Stanley Jones; *The Four Loves* by C. S. Lewis; *Sexual Fulfillment in Marriage* by the Groves.

My thanks are extended to the elders of the Church of Christ in Eastridge, Fort Worth, Texas, (Frank O. Allen, Wade L. Banowsky, W. L. Burlison, and Thomas A. Gardner), for their planning of the series of sermons which led to the publication of this book. If this series had not

been planned, I am sure that I would have never planned this book.

My thanks are also extended to those who so faithfully attended the sermons as they were delivered orally for the wonderful response which they made to the sermons. It was upon the insistence of those who heard the sermons that plans were laid to publish the series.

I

MARRIAGE — WHY STUDY IT?

For the past year in the Ladies Bible Class we have studied the subject of the Christian Home, and so many times the response of the ladies in that class was that the material we were studying was wonderful and of great value to them but their only regret was that their husbands were unable to be in the class with them. We talked many times about how we could arrange such a class. My greatest task in the preparation of this series was deciding what material to use; that is, deciding on definite topics because there was so much that could be used. I hope and pray that the material that has been decided upon will be of great value not only to every husband and to every wife, but also to every young person who is looking forward to being married himself.

There is so much that needs to be said that I decided to study, first of all: "What Is the Need for This Study?" Is it important, or isn't it? I believe it was an Englishman who said that if a Pope had ever been married he would never have come up with the doctrine of papal infallibility, because just being married awhile would help one to see that he is not infallible. Things arise which show the need for great wisdom. But I believe this morning there is a tremendous need for this study, and I hope to build up your interest in this study, so that you will be here tonight and Monday night and Tuesday night and Wednesday night to study the remainder of this series. Here are some suggestions which should help us to understand the importance of this study.

First of all, I suggest this study should be undertaken

and should be carefully listened to and applied *because of the importance of marriage* — because of the intrinsic importance of this subject.

It is important *because God has definite laws and instructions about it*. Thus, to honor and obey the laws or instructions is to be obedient to God. Obedience to God results in happiness. (Psalms 128:10; Proverbs 19:18). But, to dishonor and to disobey these instructions and laws is to be rebellious to God, and rebellion against God will result in unhappiness in this life and in the life to come. (2 Thess. 1:7-9). Note the emphasis that Jesus gives to this matter when he said, in reference to marriage, "From the beginning it hath not been so." (Matt. 19:8). So it is clear that in the beginning God intended that we should act in certain ways in regard to marriage.

It is important *because of the tremendous consequences of marriage* — both good and evil. First, I suggest that marriage implies tremendous consequences for the two parties who are being married, the *bride and groom*. People who marry will, in that marriage, gain a little taste of heaven or a little taste of hell. Marriage can either degrade or elevate any and every person who is involved in it. It will either tend to integrate one's personality and help him to be the kind of person he should be, or else it will tend to disintegrate his personality.

In the second place, marriage is of tremendous importance to the *children who came as a result of the union*. If they grow up in an atmosphere of love, they themselves will fall in love with love, but if they grow up in an atmosphere of hate it will tend to mar their personality. (Ephesians 6:1-4).

Marriage is important to the *family of both the bride and the groom*, for they cannot help but be affected by the mar-

riage of their children. Certainly the young men and the young women who marry and make a mess of their lives tragically and awfully affect the lives of their parents. They bring heartache and sorrow, and, oftentimes, they bring shame upon the whole family.

Marriage is important because it so tremendously affects *the community and the nation*. It was because of degradation of the relationship between the sexes that God destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. And this relationship is at the very heart of the moral fibre of any people. Thus the Bible declares that righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people. (Prov. 14:34). And our nation today, I am thoroughly convinced, is being vitally and awfully affected by what its people are doing in regard to marriage. Nations rise and fall as a result of the moral fibre of its people, and its moral fibre cannot rise above its attitude and its practices in marriage. The family is the chief engineer in charge of the construction of human personality, and there can be no good construction of human personality where the husband and wife are not what they should be. So, first of all, I have suggested to you that this study should be undertaken because of the importance of marriage.

In the second place, a detailed study of marriage should be undertaken *because of the efforts that are currently being made to destroy marriage and the home*. And, as we consider these efforts, let us note the *deliberate* efforts, being made to destroy marriage and the home. This is the effort of the *Marxists*, or the *Communists* as they are more commonly known. Their effort is to achieve by deliberate, ideological emphasis the destruction of marriage and the home. I should like to read a point or two from the *Communist Manifesto*, in the chapter on the Family. "The bourgeois claptrap about the family and education, about

the hallowed co-relation of parent and child . . ." So you see, to Communists, to speak of the relationship of husband and wife as being hallowed, sacred, or bound up with honor in any way is just so much claptrap. The *Manifesto* also said, "The bourgeois family will vanish as a matter of course when its complement (prostitution) vanishes, and both will vanish with the vanishing of capital." Communists envision the time when there will be neither capital nor family. They tie together individual freedom, the right of free enterprise, marriage and the family as we know them, as they are guaranteed by our constitution, and throw them into the same trash-can. May the Lord deliver us from such evil.

Further, the Communists teach that the training of children belongs, not to the parents of the children, but to the state. This theory has been made concrete in Red China, where government officials have separated husbands from wives and parents from children, with each living in separate barracks. They are allowed to see each other only a short while every so often. This is degrading, embarrassing, and depriving beyond human description. It is an effort to reduce human beings to the level of animals and to the level of being mere pawns of the state. It is diametrically opposed to what God set forth in His blessed Word about the happiness that should come to men and women in their marriage and to their children because of being in a happy home.

Still further, the Communists treat men and women in the very same way except for some minor and special provisions for pregnancy and nursing. Communists claim that so long as women remain in the home and do only housework, they are mere parasites on society. They claim that women must pull their part of the load of production and produce as much as men. By the device of what they claim

is an emancipation of women, they seek to double their productive capacity or output. This is the reason why Communists take women out of the homes and place them in factories and on farms. The breakup of the family — the degradation of marriage — is central to the Communist theory. They feel that they cannot allow the existence of an independent cultural unit, such as is the family as it is found in free America.

We have looked for a few moments at the deliberate effort to destroy marriage and the family. Now let us look for just a bit at the *indeliberate*, perhaps *unconscious*, efforts to destroy marriage and the family.

In our own great nation, there is no deliberate, ideological, or concerted attack on marriage and the family, but the crumbling of marriage and the family is there nevertheless. The foundations of the family are being destroyed as the result of the combination of a number of factors. And, I am afraid, there is a very close analogy between what is happening to our nation and what was happening to the great Empire of Rome, just before its fall. Note, if you please, the following things which are happening in America — perhaps I should have said *to America*.

For one thing, *people do not believe that they must obey God*. Oh, I suppose most of them think it is all right if you do obey God, but comparatively few feel that one really must obey God. "The Bible is a back-number," is the cry of the multitudes. Very few people feel that men have to pay any attention to the Bible. No religion or just any religion is just as good as *the* religion of Christ in the minds of most. Modernism, which denies the basic fundamentals of Christianity, is rampant on every hand.

In the next place, I suggest that you consider *the ease with which divorce is obtained* and how often the ease of

the thing is exercised in this nation. A glance at your newspaper will show that almost as many people get divorces each day as obtain licenses to marry. Many of the people who divorce do so over and over. But men and women now obtain divorces for almost any trifling reason you can think of. Just so long as they do not want to live together any longer, our civil courts are usually open to quickly and easily provide them a way out of their marriage.

Another very disturbing thing which has happened to this nation is *the lowering of the standards of sexual morality*. Most people in this nation are no longer shocked by extremely immodest dress. Women parade the streets in attire which is perhaps best described as being "next to nothing." The men are not shocked and the women are not shamefaced about it. The Bible teaches that women ought to be able to blush when their bodies are exposed to anyone except their own husbands, but I am afraid that this nation is far beyond that point. The people are no longer shocked by pre-marital sexual relationship nor by marital infidelity. Youngsters who engage in such are given, as it were, a slight slap on the wrist, and sent merrily on their way. The magazine racks of our nation are filled with magazines which can be described accurately as just plain lewd! A few years ago in this nation, it was a disgrace to be forced into marriage or to be divorced for any reason other than the infidelity of one's marriage partner. But such is not now the case. It would be difficult today to imagine what one would have to do to be disgraced in the average community.

This moral break-down is further seen in the fact that *the "heroes" of the people of this nation are, many times, people whose morals with the opposite sex are hardly above those of the animals of the barnyard*. Prominent

leaders, even religious leaders, urge the people to accept the idea that there is no such thing as right and wrong. One widely-acclaimed philosopher, Bertrand Russell, declared that sin is not a useful notion; that is, it is not a useful notion to hold to the idea that some things are right and other things are wrong. Nothing is white or black; all is gray. Not long ago, a prominent preacher was quoted as saying that there are not enough divorces. He claimed that because so many people do not get along, they ought to divorce. No, what they should do is to get right with God, learn how to get along with one another, and help one another to so live in this life that they will both go to heaven when this life is over.

The leading "slick" magazines of this nation are almost constantly barraging the people with articles which tend to undermine the moral fibre of this nation. Only recently one magazine featured an article entitled, "Do We Need a New Sex Code?" The writer of the article maintained that we did. Some of the things which he said should be in this new code are shocking indeed. Such men look upon the moral code upheld by the Bible as being out of date, not suited for "moderns." They reject the idea that when one gets out beyond the limits set by the Bible in the relations between men and women he has committed sin. This is why some of them say that sin is "not a useful notion." But we must stand up and cry aloud that violations of the moral code as set forth in the Bible is *sin* — S-I-N — sin! (I John 3:4). Sin is the transgression of the law of God.

Another thing that is happening in this country is that of allowing other institutions to take over the functions of the home. The church should do all of the teaching it can do, but it is still the function of the *home* — not of the church — to rear children. God has given *parents* the job of raising the children. God expects *parents* to bring up

their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. (Ephesians 6:1-4). When two people fall in love, get married, and bring children into the world — as they certainly should do — then they have automatically brought upon themselves a tremendous responsibility, a responsibility for which God Himself shall hold them accountable. (2 Cor. 5:10).

And still further, in this matter of the break-down of the moral fibre of this nation, it should be noted that *more and more women are leaving the home for employment in business*. More and more, we are doing undeliberately and unconsciously what the Communists are doing deliberately in following a basic tenet in their ideology. I appeal to you to consider this point.

So far now, we have studied two points as to why we should study the subject of marriage: (1) it should be studied because of the intrinsic importance of marriage, and (2) it should be studied because of efforts being made to destroy marriage. Now let us take a look at the third reason I suggest this subject should be studied carefully and prayerfully: *marriage should be studied because of the purposes of marriage*. Let us now study the purposes of marriage.

One purpose of marriage is *to provide needed human companionship*. When God created man, He saw that it was not good for man to be alone so He made a helper who was fit for him; that is, one who was man's counter-part, exactly suited for him. (Genesis 2:20-25). In so doing, God did not make another man; He made woman. Of course, men need to enjoy the companionship of other men, but man needs more than mere male companionship. He needs something more profound and significant than this. And I do not mean mere physical sex. Man needs to love a

woman and to be loved by a woman; that is, most men do. You can study something of the exception to this in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. Woman is the completing part of a man. He is not truly complete without her. She supplies that which is absent in man. She is that person who allows man to express himself, to know himself, and to develop himself. In the same way, without man, woman cannot truly know, express or develop herself. But I must leave a more detailed discussion of this point to a time later in the series.

Another purpose of marriage is to *propagate the race of man*. (Genesis 1:28). Some people try to thwart this purpose and refuse to have any children. God will judge such. Also, others violate God's will by having children out of wedlock. It is the purpose of marriage to propagate the race, and this is not to be done outside of marriage.

Another purpose of marriage is to *develop and nurture an atmosphere of love in which children can be raised*. Sexual relationship in marriage helps to foster such an atmosphere. It can also destroy such an atmosphere or keep it from developing. More attention will be given to this point later in this study.

In I Corinthians the seventh chapter, Paul emphasizes another purpose of marriage: *the prevention of immorality*. Every man and woman who has the need should have their own companion. Each companion is to render to the other "due benevolence" in the fulfillment of the marital obligation. Study I Corinthians 7 thoroughly in regards to this point.

Also, marriage has the purpose of *providing men and women with such experiences as will help each of them to develop spiritually*. Both Ephesians 5:22-32 and I Peter

3:7 make this point clear. More of this will be explained later.

As a final purpose of marriage, at least the last one I am going to suggest to you, I suggest that marriage has the purpose of *giving man a model of his relationship with Christ*. In writing to the Ephesian brethren, Paul said, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it." (Eph. 5:25). If both husbands and wives would heed this teaching, here is what the situation would be: (1) husbands would love their wives tenderly and unselfishly; (2) wives would lovingly submit themselves to the leadership and care of their husbands. What happiness would then replace the misery that dominates so many homes! How much more would men and women — because of this happiness — be drawn to God in thanksgiving.

So far, we have studied three reasons why we should study the subject of marriage. Here is a fourth reason why it should be studied: *because marriage involves such profound commitment*. Getting married involves such profound commitment, such far-reaching vows. But we are going to spend an entire sermon on this one point next Monday night, so I will defer further consideration of this point at this time. I hope that *you* will be with us when we study, tomorrow evening, the subject: "Marriage — the Profound Significance of 'I Do'." However, let me say this morning — without going into much detail — that there are many people in the world today who do not understand that marriage is not a mere human contract which can be broken on just any trifling condition. Rather it is a covenant which involves a commitment to share one's life with another person: in prosperity and in poverty, in happiness and in sorrow, in sickness and in health, and the keeping of oneself to that person only so long as both

shall live. I intend, the Lord being my helper, to go into this matter as thoroughly as time will permit on Monday evening.

Another reason we should study this subject is: *marriage is everybody's business*. Sometimes youngsters, and sometimes even old ones, say "What we are doing is our business, it isn't anyone else's." That is a tragic error. Of course, it is the business of the two who are getting married, but it is also *God's* business. Because marriage is *God's* business, God has regulated it. He has given very stringent laws, instructions, and limitations by which marriage is to be governed. Someday, He shall call to account everyone of us who lives in violation of these instructions. The Bible teaches that God hates covenant breakers. (Malachi 2:13-16). It teaches that He is highly displeased with those who put away their companions for any reason other than fornication.

It is also the business of the *children who are born as a result of this union*. The parents which a child has are very important to him. For a person to say, "This marriage is our business and not that of anyone else," shows a lack of depth and understanding of the matter.

It is the business of *the families of the bride and groom involved*, for these families cannot help but be involved in this union.

It is the business of the *community* and of the *nation*. This is why marriage should be public. This is why the courtship should be public. This is why the announcement of the intention to marry should be public. This is why the ceremony itself should be public. I believe we ought to hold out before our young men and women the goal of having their wedding in such a public way as will declare to the community, to the nation, and to all who know them,

their intention to form this honorable union. This is why we should be married in the community where we are known. We are affected by the feeling of our friends, those who know us best. We should openly declare our intention to establish this union and we should do it among those who know us, and we should do it ahead of time. I like to see our youngsters have their wedding in a church building and make a big affair out of it. I like to see the girls in their bridal gowns. This isn't necessary, of course, and some can't afford it, but when they can, I would encourage them to do it. I feel it helps to keep them pure before marriage and impress upon them the significance of their vows after the wedding.

Then, marriage should be studied because there are *so many factors which can cause failure*. But we defer the discussion of that topic because it is the subject of our entire sermon to be delivered this evening; that is, the next sermon in this series.

Again, I suggest that marriage should be studied *because so many couples fail to go to the right source for information on how to form, and build or continue their marriage*. Many times couples planning to marry go to uninformed people, people who claim to know — but do not. Sometimes they go to magazines, or to newspapers. They use the lives of people. Sometimes they draw their conclusions about marriage from what they see in the movies. They use the lives of people whose lives are rotten to the core. Young people, old people, let us hearken ourselves back to the sacred will of Almighty God as the source of information as to how to form and how to build our marriages. In our nation today one out of every three marriages ends in divorce. Now this is not as bad as it appears on the surface. It is terrible, but only one out of every 14 women in this nation has been divorced and remarried. This in-

dicates that many of these divorces are occurring among those who have already been divorced and remarried. This should serve as a warning: when a person divorces once, he is likely to do so again and again. We need to come back to the sacred scriptures to find the answer to this problem: Who is eligible to be married? And to this problem: after we are married, how should we live with one another? We must realize what was involved in the commitment we made when we said "I do promise to do thus and so." We must realize that it is not a temporary arrangement to fit the whims and fancies of people who have never grown up, but that it is a serious and solemn covenant made in the sight of God.

We need to study this subject because: *there are such distorted views as to how to choose a companion*. Today, Hollywood seems to be setting the standards for our nation to such an extent that our boys and girls confuse mere physical attraction with being truly in love. If one "loves" another only for the purpose of gaining purely selfish goals, this is not the love which should motivate one to be married. Unselfish love is the love that should develop and grow down through the years of every married couple. (I Corinthians 13). Some people marry for social advantage. Others marry for financial advantage. There is a great need today for people to go back to the *Bible* and study what it has to say about choosing a companion and what it says about how husbands and wives should live with one another.

Again, I suggest that we need to study this subject because: *our spiritual development depends upon it*. The Apostle Peter taught that husbands should dwell with their wives according to knowledge to the end that their prayers be not hindered. (I Peter 3:7). I am certain that one of the greatest hindrances to spiritual development would be

a marriage that isn't working out as God would have it work out. Can you picture a man or woman whose companion is constantly criticizing, disgruntled, unhappy, full of self pity, mistrust, jealousy and envy trying to develop spiritually in that kind of atmosphere? ' It is possible, but highly improbable. It is clear that Peter taught that the way we live with one another as husband and wife has a great deal to do with the way we develop spiritually. It has a great deal to do with how closely we can walk with God. Young people, although I will say a lot more about it later in this series, may I emphasize to you this morning that your choice of a life's companion may be the choice of a destiny. It will likely be the choice of a happy life or an unhappy life here in this world. It may be the choice of an eternity — whether you will spend it with God in heaven, or in hell prepared for the devil and his angels.

This subject is important. It is worthy of most serious consideration not only by these youngsters who are looking forward to being married, not only by young people who have not been married very long, but by those of us who have been married a long time. Some who are older need help with their marriage. They are not happy in their marriage, and they ought to be. God shows us how to be. I believe the Bible teaches that they can be. I believe the Bible gives the answer as to how our marriage can be an instrument to bring us happiness and joy, how it can be a profound experience which is beyond adequate description, how it can help us not only to be closer to one another but how it can help to draw us closer to God. God intends for marriage to do that very thing. He intends for us to learn in this relationship more of His love for us and of our relationship to Him. (Ephesians 5:22-23).

Because of these and other reasons, which lack of time forbids our discussing, I hope you will be with us through-

out this entire series. Be with us tonight when we shall study "Why So Many Marriages Fail." Be with us Monday evening when we shall study "The Profound Significance of 'I Do'." Be with us Tuesday night when we shall study: "Marriage Is Not for Babies." It is not for the immature; it is for *men* and *women*, those who have grown up, who have reached adult years, and who have reached emotional maturity. Finally, on Wednesday evening we shall study: "Yours Can Be a Happy Marriage." A happy marriage can be attained provided *both* partners will listen to what the Bible teaches on this matter. I hope that everyone of us will be here and that we will do our very best to bring our friends and neighbors. It may be that our friends and neighbors will be brought to obedience to the gospel because of hearing what the Bible teaches on Marriage. Because they will thus be enabled to live happier lives together. There is hardly anything that would help more to draw one closer to God than to be happy in his marriage. On the other hand, there is hardly anything more likely to drive you away than to be faced with a decidedly unhappy marriage. Let each of us strive to make his marriage what it should be.

II

MARRIAGE — WHY IT FAILS SO OFTEN

So much needs to be said on this subject. It will be hard to confine this lesson tonight to a reasonable length. As we know, the topic selected for discussion tonight is: "Why do so many marriages fail?" I assure you I will not talk about everything that needs to be talked about relative to this topic. I only hope that what I have chosen will be helpful to you. I will try to talk about things that are basic and fundamental. When I speak of marriages being "failures," I am not confining my references to marriages which end in divorce. I believe a marriage *fails* when it fails to be what God would have it to be — even if it doesn't end in divorce. I am certain that the Bible teaches that God intends for marriage to help men and women enjoy life to its fullest and to help one another to prepare to spend eternity with God. There are many marriages which do not end in divorce, but which do not reach this high goal. Many marriages are failing in our nation today, and not all of these failures involve people out of the church. The marriages of many people who profess to be followers of Christ are failures — even when they don't end in divorce. Of course, many marriages do fail so drastically as to end in divorce. And, again, not all of these failures are among non-church members. The number of marriages in our nation which are ending in divorce is alarming indeed. Even among members of the Lord's church many marriages are very little like what God would have them to be. A few generations ago, it was absolutely "taboo" for anyone to discuss marriage and preparation for marriage. We reacted from that erroneous extreme. Many people seem

to think we could solve all problems of marriage if we just brought sex out in the open and talked about it. But now our nation talks of little else, and it has been talked about in a *sordid* way. It has been made to appear to be something evil and ugly. Apparently, the church decided to be absolutely quiet and say nothing about it whatsoever. I do not find any such attitude in the word of God. The Bible writers were not reluctant to discuss these matters. To be sure, the Bible discusses them on a high and holy plane. This is what we would expect. The Bible recognizes the relationship between husband and wife as something pure and honorable. (Hebrews 13:4). But, young people, let me assure you that the Bible gives the answers to the problems that are so weighty upon your minds at this time of your life. You young people who are in your teens, looking forward to being married, this is how God would have it to be. He has endowed your physical being with strong motivations. It is right, it is honorable, for you to be intensely interested in persons of the opposite sex. This is the way God would have it. It is the way He designed mankind. God himself gave these desires to mankind. God also gave mankind His word which contains the regulations as to how we can make marriage what it should be.

Marriages are failing, and I believe the Bible gives the answer as to questions of why they are failing. It also gives the information on how to prevent such failure.

Basically, marriages fail because the persons involved in them fail as persons. This is true because persons involved in such failures are not guided by the Bible. Marriages fail because inadequate persons are involved, and these inadequate persons then become inadequate partners. To have a happy, successful marriage, one that God would have us to have, there must be adequate *partners*. And to have adequate partners there must be adequate

people. The Bible is not dark and mysterious on these matters. Bible teaching on marriage is as plain as is the teaching on the Gospel plan of salvation.

So, tonight, let us turn our attention in a negative way to this topic. Then, on Wednesday night, we shall look in the positive way at the factors which enable us to have a successful marriage.

The following points are not given in any order; that is, I have not tried to decide which factor is most decisive in causing failure in marriage. I have simply listed them and will do my best to explain them for your benefit. I hope and pray they are of value to all of us.

One factor in the failure of so many marriages is: *the failure to understand the commitment* which is involved in marriage. On tomorrow evening, we shall study in detail the commitment which marriage involves. At that time we shall study: "The Profound Significance of 'I Do'." To what do we commit ourselves when we go through the wedding ceremony?

When we marry, we say, "Till death us do part." This is practically a permanent, unconditional surrender. It is a gaining of liberty but with stringent limitations. It is liberty regulated by the will of Christ. A fuller discussion of that must wait until tomorrow evening.

Another reason for failure in marriage is *immaturity*. I plan to devote an entire lesson to this on Tuesday evening, but this is so important — so vital and fundamental that I must say something about it in this lesson tonight. An immature person is simply not an adequate marriage partner. During the course of a lifetime, people pass through several stages. First, they are *children*. During this stage they are in the *period of dependence*, and must

depend upon others for their care, protection and provision. Someone else must give them the things they need. Second, they come to the stage in life called *adolescence*. During this stage, they are in the *period of seeking to be independent*. They tend to resent any authority. They resent the authority of parents, of civil government, of teachers, and so on. This is a natural thing, because they are seeking to find their place as independent individuals. Rather than being just the children of some other individual, they seek to be individuals on their own. Finally, the stage of *maturity* is reached. When one really reaches maturity he is no longer striking out, fighting for independence, as he did when he was an adolescent. He now has reached the stage of *inter-dependence*. During this period, he seeks good not only for himself but also for others, and for God. Some people never mature. All their lives they remain in adolescence. They are always fighting for their own way, always placing themselves at the center of the picture. Failure to mature is one of the most prevalent causes of failure in marriage. Many married people have simply failed to grow up. They are still fighting, much as an adolescent would, for their own way. They are dominated by the kind of thinking that causes a child to say "I will take my ball and go home if you don't let me be first batter." Some married folks pack up and literally "go home to Mama." Others stay with their companions but never grow out of this adolescent emotional attitude. The judge of family relations court said that the greatest cause of divorce is emotional adolescence. He meant that marriages fail because people do not grow up emotionally. No one is emotionally mature until he learns — and truly practices this great truth — that it is more blessed to give than to receive. Jesus told us this. Why can we not believe, accept, and practice it? Many of you

in this audience tonight may be unhappy in your marriage simply because you are so *selfish*! Are you still on the emotional level of that high school son or daughter of yours?

Another factor which causes failure in marriage is *unfair or harsh criticism*. For any marriage to be a success, it is not enough to have just one adequate partner. One partner may be entirely adequate. He may be just the kind of person that God would have him to be, but, just as it takes two to have a fight, so it takes two adequate partners to have a successful marriage. A marriage may fail because both partners are inadequate persons, and it may also fail because one of the partners is an inadequate person. When one or both partners fall into this habit of criticizing, of constantly looking for that which is wrong, then that marriage is in trouble. None of us is above criticism. We all deserve it, because none of us is perfect. But criticizing seems to be popular among people because it gives them a satisfaction they usually can get in no other way. One of the ways it gives satisfaction involves hypocrisy. Usually we are hypocrites when we say "I am doing this for your good." Usually we are trying to do it for our own good — at least we feel it will be to our good when we make ourselves feel superior to the one (our marriage partner) we criticize. Actually, criticism tends to end in self-righteousness, and many times this leads marriage partners to wind up with each feeling extremely self-righteous but hurt and wounded when each has been as much at fault as the other. When people fall into the habit of criticizing they usually come to the point of criticizing almost everything. They are never happy, never satisfied, never in a good mood. They ruin their disposition and general outlook on life. Here then is an important question: How can we grow out of this carping, critical, disgruntled attitude which always leads to self-pity?

For one thing, *we recognize that criticism is not the way of Christ*. To fall into this habit is to depart from the way Christ would have us to live. Another thing we can do is to pray more. I trust all of you pray some. When we are tempted to criticize our partner, let us use prayer as a barrier to keep out the attitude which causes us to criticize. We should pray that God will help us to think of the things that are good about our companion. Concentrate on the things that are *good*! Those of us who have been married for a long time need to remember that at one time we fell in love with our partners. This means we saw many wonderful things about them. Why not now concentrate our thoughts on those things? Also, let us remember that we usually respond much better to others when they note the things that are good about us than we do when we feel they have harshly criticized us. We need to try to put ourselves in the position of the other person and try to see why the situation which led to our criticism came about. Above all, remember, even though you do not like what the other person *does*, you can still continue to love the person — who has weakness, as you do — and get out of this constant process of criticism. It would be much better to sit down and talk the matter over as two christians who sincerely and deeply love one another, and resolve the matter, than to allow yourselves to fall in the habit of constant carping and harshly criticizing.

Another factor in the failure of marriage is *sensitivity*. This is closely akin to what I just finished talking about. Perhaps I should have said *wrong - sensitivity*. We all are sensitive. Sometimes we are sensitive in a right way and sometimes we are sensitive in a wrong way. Certainly our lives are wrapped up in sensitivity. Lower forms of life — and extremely selfish people — are sensitive only to the needs of themselves. Mature, unselfish, loving people

are sensitive to the needs of their fellow-man. Such people are sensitive to the needs of the companion in marriage. Jesus manifested this sensitivity in a perfect way when he identified himself with the poor of the earth. He said, "I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat. I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink . . ." (Matt. 25:42). Thus Jesus counted it a failure to minister to men a failure to minister to Him. He thus identified Himself — in that sense — with man. Just so, married people need to learn to identify themselves with one another. "He that loves his wife loves himself." (Ephesians 5).

When we are criticized — or when we interpret a statement as criticism — how should we react? These are some questions we should ask ourselves. First, is the criticism true? If so, let us accept it graciously and make whatever changes are necessary. None of us is perfect, so we should not be too offended to learn of our failures. None of us has reached perfection. We must be striving toward it. (Phil. 3:12,13). We must be on the road. Sometimes criticism from others will help us to stay on the road toward perfection. It can help us — if we react properly — to get farther down the road in a shorter time. But, if the criticism is unjust — and oft times it is — then do not allow yourself to harbor resentment. Do not let yourself conceive of your critic as an enemy. We receive criticism many times from people other than our companion. Then our immediate reaction is to wish to strike back at that person. I have found this to be true; if you will write a note describing your feelings at this time and — instead of mailing it — put it in a drawer and keep it there for a week, when you look at it again you will offer a prayer of thanksgiving that you didn't send it. It is much that same way when we are criticized in our own home. We all are weak. Sometimes we criticize one another when in another

moment we wouldn't do it. So when your beloved criticizes you, try to hold back that word of reaction. Don't both of you be upset at once. Remember: it takes two to make a fight. If you refuse to criticize when you are criticized — if both of you will do it — it won't be long until most of the criticism is stopped. Say something kind and good in return for criticism. It is hard, I know — but it is worth so much. Do not allow a drop, not a single drop, of self-pity to come into your heart. Rather, concentrate upon thanking the Lord, not only for your blessings in general, but for the companion which God has given you. Then, above all, become so interested in serving Christ that you forget to wear your feelings on your sleeves. You know when we are really interested in something, little things can happen to us without our even noticing them. I remember when I was a little boy, a bunch of us kids were playing one night, playing by moonlight out in the yard. In those days, the cars were high off the ground and a child could roll under one without any trouble. Another boy was chasing me, and I rolled under this car and cut my leg rather severely with a piece of an old broken bottle. But I was having so much fun, rolling and running fast, and was so wrapped up in the game we were playing that I didn't even notice it. A little while later I went into the house and was getting a drink of water when someone called my attention to the fact that there was a pool of blood all around my feet. Life in general is much like that incident. If we are really involved in serving Christ with all of our heart, then we will not be so sensitive to many of these things that tend to destroy happiness in marriage. Get wrapped up in serving others, and you won't hear so many insults. You'll be happier if you will.

Sometimes marriages fail because one or both of the partners are torn asunder by inner conflicts. Each may be

a house divided against itself. They are a civil war all by themselves. Such inner conflict that leads to nervous breakdowns. As I have mentioned, some people are not so much at war with others as they are at war with themselves. This inner war causes them to be inadequate partners. They are not able to be the kind of marriage partner that they should be. As a result, instead of bringing happiness, they destroy it. They thus rob their companions of happiness. The lives of married people are so intertwined that the unhappiness of one is almost sure to destroy the happiness of the other. We need to spend time, brethren, in the study of the Beatitudes. Study prayerfully Matthew 5:1-13. This is the pattern for mental health. It will bring us joy and peace and fill our lives.

Another reason for failure in marriage is lack of trust in one another. Marriages in which husband and wife do not trust one another are very poor ones. Jealousy and mistrust are so destructive. Husbands and wives should have such trust in one another that they could be thousands of miles away from one another and neither one would even entertain the thought that the other would be unfaithful to their marriage vow. But many people have destroyed their marriage, have destroyed their opportunity for happiness and their possibility of building for themselves the kind of marriage God wants them to have, because one or both did not trust the other. Of course, each one of us should be worthy of trust. (Romans 7:1-4). We should be *trustworthy*. We must live in harmony with the vow that we made.

Then, *another failure* — and I wish to spend quite a bit of time upon this point — *is failure in physical intimacy.* The sexual relationship is the “added language” which God has given to man and woman in order that they may express adequately to one another the depths of their love.

God gave this "language" to married couples, and it is far more expressive than human speech. When couples fail in love, when they become selfish, critical and harsh, when they fail because of ignorance, then the "added language" that is reserved to this one class of people can become a language of unhappiness. The experiences of couples told to marriage counselors testify to this. May I re-emphasize that God reserves this "added" or "extra language" to be "spoken" only by those who are married. It is a grievous sin for those who are not married to one another to attempt to speak it. Note that I said *attempt* to speak it, for those who are not married to one another cannot really speak it. Such attempts — being violations of God's law — can only bring sorrow, not joy. But, just because physical intimacy is limited by God's law to the married, it does not follow that all married people can speak the language well. Sometimes, married partners look upon the other simply as a *thing* to be used to satisfy their own desires. When this is the case, the "added language" is reduced to "jargon." Such activity is damaging to the persons involved. Their spirits, not their bodies, suffer the damage. It is a reduction of one's marriage partner to the status of a thing — one partner is exploiting, and the other is being exploited. One reduced the other to a *thing* rather than recognizing them as being a *person*, with the dignity that God has given to every person. It is a failure to recognize him or her as a person with great worth in the sight of God. It is a failure to recognize the spiritual level which God intends for this person to reach.

God intends for every married person to do his very best to help his companion to walk closer to God. A man who considers his wife solely as an instrument by which his physical desires are satisfied is failing miserably in meeting God's goal for him. Several years ago a physician —

a member of the Lord's church — once told me that much of the illness among people was emotionally — not organically — induced. He further said, that in his opinion, much of the poor emotions was caused by poor sex relations. And, in turn, the poor emotions causes even worse sex relation. It becomes, according to that doctor, something of a vicious circle. He said this fact gave him great concern, and he just wanted to talk about it for a bit. He said many of the patients in his office at that very moment were there because of such. What to do about it? He wondered. I hope this series of lessons supplies at least some of the answers. *Selfishness* may manifest itself in this fashion, and according to marriage counselors, this particular type of selfishness is manifested most often by the husband, but selfishness may also manifest itself in *deprivation*, the withholding of oneself from the other. Wives are more often guilty of this. The Apostle Paul taught in I Cor. 7 that such action is not in harmony with the will of God. Barring some valid reason, such as illness, neither partner has the right to withhold himself from the other.

Sometimes marriages fail because of *ignorance of physical anatomy* — ignorance of simple anatomy and of the emotional differences that exist between man and woman. There is no reason today for anyone who is approaching marriage or who is already married to be ignorant of the basic facts of human anatomy. If you are already married and have not taken the time to study these things seriously and reverently, that is, to study the bodies that God has given to man and woman, then you have done yourselves an injustice. Your parents ought to have seen to it that you were taught these things before you were ever married. Paul taught that the older women should teach the younger women to "love their husbands." (Titus 2:4). Why

would a father or mother let their children marry in ignorance of matters which are so vital to complete happiness? There are good books which explain these matters. It would be good for young people to have interviews with Christian physicians before they are married. Mothers, teach your daughters to love their husbands. Fathers, teach your sons to cherish their wives.

Some people are ignorant of Bible teaching and therefore are incapable of viewing the marriage union in the exalted way that God would have them to view it. The sex drive in most people is strong, and our young men and women are seeking already to find a *meaning* to it. Some people suggest that we find the meaning to it in *license*—that we recognize no limitation whatever. More and more in our magazines and newspapers we find statements from leading religious, medical, and psychological writers to the effect that so long as two people are of mature years, what they do is their own business. But this is an erroneous and highly hurtful teaching. The meaning of sex cannot be found in license.

The meaning of sex cannot be found in denying any sexual expression whatever. Marriage counselors who have spent years in listening to the problems of various marriages, tell us many wives — and possibly some husbands — look upon sex as something to be avoided. If they had their way, they would deny all such expression. Others think they are being especially pious and holy because they put themselves behind the wall of a monastery and forego marriage. This is absurd. In fact, it manifests an unhealthy frame of mind. Marriage is honorable in the sight of God. (Hebrews 13:4). It is wrong to view the physical intimacy of husband and wife as vulgar, impure, or dishonorable. (I Corinthians 7:1-5).

It is also wrong to view physical intimacy as being confined to bringing children into the world. It involves this, of course, but it is not limited to that. Those who say that married people must limit physical relationship to such times as they wish children to be conceived, have missed the point of I Corinthians 7:15 and some other passages as well. God created man with physical urges and desires. He has various biological functions. But he has more than this. He has emotional and spiritual drives, urges, and desires.

As a spiritual being, man has relationship with God. When man properly considers this relationship, all of his drives and urges (physical, mental and emotional, and spiritual) take on deeper meaning. The truth of the matter is, man's entire personality is involved in the situation. In Psalms 139, the psalmist, as he considered his own body, declared, "... I am fearfully and wonderfully made." Men and women, husbands and wives, you are both wonderfully made. In the beginning, God saw that it was not good for man to be alone. God knew that man needed a companion, one who would be his counter-part, a "helper fit" for him, who could supply that which man lacked. Let each of us remember that woman was taken from man and was made *for* man by God himself. Why should anyone be ashamed of the fact that man and woman were designed by God for each other?

Sex has moral and social implications. When it is misused, or when it is indulged in out of harmony with God's law, then not only have the parties involved become guilty of the sin of fornication, but the life of the community and nation will be somewhat affected. (Proverbs 14:34). When the *people* of a nation are wicked, the moral fibre of the nation itself is rotten. Surely, we should all view with

great alarm what is happening relative to these matters in our own nation.

But the fundamental purpose of sex is to help in the spiritual development of both husband and wife — and the children as well. The spiritual development of the children is helped by the atmosphere of love and affection which results from a proper sex life of the husband and wife. Physical intimacy — or the possibility of it — is a gift from God to man and woman, that by the proper exercise of it they may be brought closer to Him.

The physical side of married life enables the husband and wife to express some things to one another that they could not express as adequately in any other way. By it, they express to one another the deep commitment which each has made to the other to completely and permanently share their lives with one another. By it they say to one another, "I am yours, you are mine; we are each other's. Nothing but death can separate us."

Can you not see why it is so absurd for the church to take such a "back-seat" in the teaching of these matters. I do not mean the details of physical anatomy, or the details of physical intimacy — but I do mean preachers and teachers should teach on the *deeper meaning of sex* and the part it plays in the happiness and spiritual development of young and old. We must not allow our young people to gain their impressions of its meaning from sordid companions, sordid literature, or sordid entertainment. We must show them that *God* has spoken on this matter. We must show them what a proper understanding and practice of God's instructions in this matter will mean to them. We must help them to see that the relationship between husband and wife is not primarily physical but is primarily spiritual.

Of course, Christians should fully acknowledge sex as a physical function. But at the same time, they must insist that this has not told the whole story. Christians must insist that it is a function which involves the entire man — his physical, mental and emotional, and spiritual elements — and that none of the various elements can, with proper understanding, be disassociated from the others. Certainly, the physical relationship cannot be disassociated from the spiritual aims of man.

A man or a woman, a husband or a wife, is not a mere *thing* to be used. They are persons to be loved and respected, honored and cherished, in sickness and in health, in prosperity and in poverty. I suppose, however, that some people conceive of themselves as being married to *things*, for they treat their companions as mere *tools* to satisfy their own desires alone, to reach only their own purposes.

Physical intimacy cannot be treated as a trifling, temporary encounter which involves only the physical element of man. Rather, it is primarily a spiritual encounter between two people, who will be affected by this encounter either for much good or for much evil.

Christ would have husbands and wives to view one another not only for what each means to the other but for *what each means to God*. We are to do so with all people. We are to do so with *added depth* with our beloved in marriage. We must view our companion not only for what they are at any given time, but for what God intends for them to be, and for what they can be if both partners are obedient to God.

Certainly, sex is misused by some who are not married to one another. It may also be misused by those who are married to one another! Each marriage partner has the solemn obligation to try to make every moment of every

day as happy as possible for his or her companion. Neither one has the right to make any moment unhappy for the other. Neither has the right to be forgetful of this obligation.

Those who have had many years of experience in marriage counseling tell us that this side of married life is allowed by many couples to become a source of unhappiness, rather than happiness as God intended it to be. It is precisely because sex is capable of producing such happiness that it is also capable of producing such misery. To misuse it is to sin against oneself, against the partner, and against God. However, the same unselfishness, the same sympathy, the same kindness and consideration that bring happiness in other phases of married life, also bring happiness in this phase. But where physical intimacy is dominated by selfishness, lack of sympathy, lack of kindness and courtesy, then it can — and very likely will — become degrading. It will tend to disintegrate the personality rather than building a person who is “at one” with himself. When man uses sex as God has told him to use it — to express his love to the woman to whom he has committed himself as a companion so long as they both shall live on earth — then it will help tremendously in his development as a spiritual being.

It should be noted that God gave the initiative to man when He taught, through Paul, that husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church. (Ephesians 5). We love God because He first loved us. (I John 4:19). Christ took the initiative in gaining the church as His bride. (Acts 20:28). In much the same way, the husband is to take the initiative in manifesting the kind of sacrificial love that causes the church to love Christ for the gift of His own life. Love can be kindled and caused to grow by husbands showing this sacrificial love. It can be destroyed by self-

ishness—which may indeed be the root behind many, many marriage problems.

Without sex, marriage is not complete. I do not mean to say that people are not married until the first sexual relationship. Sex relationship is a *privilege* of marriage—it is not what marries us. By saying that without sex marriage is not complete, I mean it is not a complete relationship as God would have it. Without sex it lacks an element which is vital to continued maintenance and growth of the love and oneness between husband and wife. It gives to marriage a meaning and value that it could not have otherwise.

On the other hand, sex without marriage is terribly in violation of human personality. Let us brand it for what it is: *sin*! It is a violation of the will of God, of the law of God. (I John 3:4). I often see articles in some of the leading magazines published in our nation with a title something like this: "What About the Case Against Pre-Marital Relationship?" Many times, the "case" which is brought against such involves factors which are destructive from a psychological standpoint. This is true. Such certainly is destructive in this way. But even back beyond that, let us brand all such action as *sinful*! Let our boys and girls understand that it is a violation of the law of God. (I Corinthians 6:13). It is time that the church arose and let its voice—that is, the voice of the *Scriptures*—be heard on this matter. It is getting to the point that we almost honor those who are guilty of this sin. A few generations ago, a man wrote a story about a woman who was branded with an "A" (for adultery) because she violated the will of God in this matter. This is an erroneous extreme, but what about the way things are going today?

Since sex is a gift from God to married people, it must

not be viewed as an evil desire for which marriage provides a way to get rid of it in secret. Since it is a gift from God, it is nothing to be ashamed of. Of course, this does not mean that we should adopt the practices of the world in this matter and talk about it from the house tops, from every billboard on the highways, from every newspaper. It does not — it emphatically does not — mean that we should ever talk about it in a lewd or sordid way. But Christian mothers ought to teach their daughters to show warm affection to their husbands, and Christian fathers ought to teach their sons to love and cherish their wives. Teach them that it is the “added language” or the “extra language” which God gave to married people. Teach them that only married people can speak it. Teach them that God is highly displeased when anyone else *attempts* to speak this language. Note again that I said, “*Attempts* to speak this language,” for only those who are married and who truly love one another and God can speak this language with its full meaning and expression. This is clearly taught in God’s Word. Not explicitly, but implicitly. But it is taught nevertheless. Why did Jesus (as recorded in John 8) tell the woman who had been caught in the very act of adultery to go her way and “sin no more”? Because she was trying to speak this language which is reserved for husbands and wives. Sex provides a medium by which husbands and wives who truly love one another — and who understand that the Lord expects each to help the other and their children to walk with God — can give fullest expression to the commitment which each has made to the other to share his life completely with the other. It is a medium much more expressive than saying, “I love you” — although this is good and should be done, often — and more expressive than a kiss alone.

Some make the suggestion that the more spiritual is the

love between husband and wife, the less they will require or desire by way of physical expression. But men thought up that idea. It did not come from the Word of God. I think I know what causes people to say such things. They think the body itself is evil. They must think this. They must think that the desire which husband and wife have for one another is basically evil and should be gotten rid of as soon as possible. The truth of the matter, the more spiritual a husband and wife are, the better will be the physical side of their married life. And the better the physical side of their married life, the better the spiritual side of their lives will be. Not that either will necessarily make the other perfect. That isn't what I am saying. What I am saying is this: spiritual growth on the part of husband and wife helps them in their sex life, and happiness in their sex life will help both of them spiritually. (I Peter 3:7). Of course, the opposite of this is also true. A degeneration of spiritual life will lead to a degeneration of the physical side of married life, and vice-versa.

Each one of us should recognize that his body has been given to him by God. It is a sacred trust and must be used as God directs. We are stewards, and stewards must be faithful in the exercise of their trust. Our bodies are instruments of expression that cannot be given in any other way. So, it seems to me that it should be clear to all that it is not spiritual development which denies or discounts physical love. Instead of indicating that one is living on a high plane, an unwillingness to be seriously concerned about the physical needs of one's partner indicates a lack of love for both one's partner and God. Marriage is for those who truly love one another and God. When people are married and live the way God intended them to live, you can be sure that they include God in their lives — they do not leave Him out. So I plead with every person who

tends to be frigid in his attitude toward his marriage partner to study carefully and prayerfully the seventh chapter of I Corinthians. In that passage, Paul clearly teaches that to withhold oneself from his partner is to be guilty of *fraud*. Rather than elevating oneself to a high spiritual plane by such action, he degrades himself to practice fraud. He degrades himself to violate the vow he took in the marriage ceremony.

Each married person has the right to the expression of love which is found in physical intimacy. And this should be more than mere acquiescence upon the part of either partner. It must be more than mere "duty" — it must be an expression of love. Sexual union is the expression of love which is already present, but it is more. Or, rather, I should say, it does more; it enhances the love already present and causes it to grow. The level of the union will depend upon the level of the love and oneness which it expresses. When the Bible uses the word "know" in referring to sexual union, it is not likely that this use comes from a desire to avoid a more direct reference. Likely, it has meaning. In this way, a husband can know his wife in a way he could never know her otherwise. And by that I do not mean physically only. The Bible shows no fear of speaking directly. So, this must have a deeper meaning. Personally, I feel that it has something to do with the profound nature of sexual union as God would have it.

In sexual union as God would have it, the husband reveals to the wife her womanhood in a way she could never know it otherwise, the wife reveals to the husband the secret of his manhood in a way he could not otherwise know it. Surely, this must be obvious to all married people — especially Christian married people who try to view marriage in the light of Bible teaching. Each discovered something about himself in the marriage relationship. But those

who enter and live in marriage in a selfish way will never see this. They cannot bring their marriage to the plane which God gave it to reach. Husbands are to love their wives as the weaker vessel. (I Peter 3:7). The wife is to be submissive and to reverence her husband. (Ephesians 5:22-23). Thus each recognizes the peculiar and unique make-up and sphere of operation of the other. The husband should recognize and be proud of the fact that he is a man. The wife should recognize and be proud of the fact that she is a woman. In sexual union, each helps the other to realize this difference perhaps better than in any other way.

When a man refuses to be a man and a woman refuses to be a woman, then sorrow is the result. Incidentally, why will a woman dress herself as if she were a man? Why would a woman want to do this?

But a person who will not follow God's instructions in this matter will neither know nor love his companion fully. Neither will such a person be fully known or fully loved. Love is dependent upon knowledge. Remember that Jesus said, "And this is life eternal, that they should know thee, the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Christ Jesus." (John 17:3). We cannot really love God without knowing Him. We cannot really love our companions — that is, on the highest level — without knowing them. Physical union helps married partners to know one another. In so doing, if it is done as God would have it done, it also helps them to love one another more and more. If it isn't done as God would have, it will destroy what love they already have for one another. At least, it will tend to do that.

Some people expect too much of marriage. Some expect too little. But Paul taught that whatever we do should be

done to the glory of God. This includes what we do in our marriage. When one expects little, he usually gets little. When he expects too much; that is, when one's expectation is not realistic, when it doesn't fit with the weaknesses and shortcomings of ordinary human beings, then one will be disappointed with both his partner and the experiences he has in marriage. We should expect a lot in marriage, but we should also expect to have to *grow* into the realization of most of those expectations. Neither Rome nor a perfect marriage was built in a day. Expect a lot of marriage, but be realistic about it. Neither you nor your partner is perfect. Each one of you is at least a little selfish; each one of you will once in a while be thoughtless and unkind. But make up your mind to keep on growing toward perfection. (Phil. 3:12, 13). You'll never reach it, but you can keep on growing toward it. It is that way with physical intimacy. Love one another and try to be as kind and thoughtful as you can, and keep on praying for God to help you to make of it what He would have you to make.

Experienced marriage counselors, physicians, and psychiatrists tell us there is hardly such a thing as sexual incompatibility, provided there is normal physical structure in both partners. They say that what some people call sexual incompatibility is really *psychological* incompatibility. I would say that it is still more likely that such is simply spiritual incompatibility. Can you imagine two people both of whom are truly living the Christian life, both of whom are normal in physical structure, and both of whom have knowledge of the physical structure of the sexes, not being truly happy in physical intimacy? Surely such is inconceivable.

But many marriages are unhappy ones because of failures in physical intimacy. There is no good reason for this. Learn the facts of physical anatomy, and then *be a Chris-*

tian in your use of it! That will guard you against a failure in your marriage in this point.

Now, may I go to another reason for failure. I have mentioned this while discussing other reasons for failure, but I want to make a separate point out of this. I want it to truly stand out in your mind. I am talking now about *failure in kindness, courtesy, and thoughtfulness*. I do not have the time this evening to discuss the details of I Cor. 13 as that chapter relates to this point. I do plan to discuss that chapter rather thoroughly on Tuesday evening. But let me at this time urge every married couple to spend time in the study of this marvelous chapter. When you truly love your companion, you will not be unkind. Love will guard you against this. But marriages fail because of this lack.

In the next place, I suggest to you that *some marriages fail because the people involved in them did not learn how to resolve conflict*. No two people in this world are exactly alike. No two people have exactly the same ideas about matters of opinion. So, it follows that there will arise times of conflict. Some married people have the maturity to properly cope with these conflicts — or differences — and others do not. Those who do not fail in their marriages. Each person is an individual with his own likes and dislikes, his own beliefs and prejudices. And when two people live together in the close intimacy of married life, there are going to be some differences. There is going to be some conflict. Some married couples are still children — or I should say they act as children — in meeting these conflicts. They react to them as they reacted to conflict during their childhood. We must be humble and prefer one another. (Romans 12:10).

Sometimes, *conflict arises because the wife wants to be*

the leader, the "boss," and, for a time at least, the husband doesn't intend to let her be the boss. So there is conflict. The battle may go on for years and years. The husband might surrender and give up the battle. But when he does, both he and his wife — as well as the children — will be tragic losers. No woman ever really wanted a "henpecked" husband after she got him. She can't respect him, so she cannot really love him. Then she cannot be really loved. In setting up this kind of atmosphere, the children are robbed of a father who is a real man. So they suffer. The husband cannot any longer respect himself. Neither can anyone else. Husbands and wives, won't you listen to what the Bible says on this point? The husband is to rule over his wife. The wife is to submit herself to her husband. Read Ephesians chapter five and see for yourself. However, when you read, note that the husband is to rule over the wife while recognizing his own subjection to Christ. The husband rules over the wife, then, in the way *Christ* wants him — not in the way he himself might want to if he were selfish and domineering. This is a wonderful safeguard to the wife. In thinking of conflicts in marriage, we think of winners of those conflicts. But actually, in marriage, there is no such thing as an individual victory; that is, there is no such thing as either the wife or the husband gaining a victory over the other. When the husband loses, the wife also loses. Their lives are so closely intertwined that this must be the case. For instance, if a wife should gain the leadership in a home, if she should become "boss," then she has lost — even though she has won the battle for leadership — for she can never really know herself as she could have with her husband in leadership. A woman in the role of leader in the home is much like a dog trying to walk on its hind legs. God didn't design a dog to walk on its hind legs, so it looks very awkward when it does so. In the same way, God did

not design woman to be the leader of the family. When she does it, she looks mighty awkward. If any of you ladies have gained the "throne" in your family, abdicate that throne immediately! Everybody will be better off if you will!

In the same way, if the husband, by extreme arrogance and selfishness, gains from his wife mere acquiescence instead of loving submission, then all are losers.

Some marriages fail because of financial problems. The young groom does not make as much money as his bride thought he would. So, she cannot buy all of the things she has been used to buying while she was at home with her parents. Or, she cannot buy what she has always thought she would buy when she at last got married. Many young couples overspend themselves. They spend beyond their income. When the time to pay bills comes and there is no money with which to do so, nerves are set on edge, tempers become frayed. Unless the two are at least somewhat mature, a battle may be the result. This has caused the break-up of many marriages.

Some marriages fail because the husband and wife are not united in Christ. The marriage may not end in divorce, but it fails nevertheless. It fails to be what God would ideally have it to be. It is obvious — or at least it should be obvious to all — that if one person truly loves the Lord and the other does not, since each needs the other in spiritual development, the result cannot but be less than that which is to be desired. If the wife is a devoted Christian and she wishes to have an active part in the work of the church, if her husband is not even a Christian, obviously they cannot even share the most important part of her life. A Christian whose partner is not a Christian brings children into the world to be raised, at least in part, by one

who is not a Christian. Why would a Christian want his children taught by one who is not a Christian? Why would one who truly loves the Lord want to share this most intimate of relationships with one who does not love the Lord? I realize that some such marriages are relatively happy, but would anyone say that such a marriage is ideal? I urge every young person to think seriously and prayerfully before even dating those who are not children of God. You will marry someone out of the group of those whom you date.

Every Christian ought to spend a great deal of time in prayer before making the decision about marriage. Remember, when you marry someone who is not a Christian, he may never become one. This means that during all of your married life, you can never really worship together; you can never really pray together. But if you do marry someone who is not a Christian, then you should do your best to live as you are taught to live in I Peter 3:1, 2 and I Corinthians 7.

Then, *some marriages fail because the husband does not love the wife as Christ loved the church*. Of course, no husband can do this perfectly, but the "love" — if it can be called that — of some husbands is so far from that (this is obvious from their actions) the marriage fails. I have already said a little about this, but let me again refer you to Ephesians chapter five, verses twenty-two through thirty-three. In that passage Paul declared that Christ loved the church so much that He gave Himself up for it. Christ loved the church in spite of the weakness of its members. He knows that none of us is perfect. Yet He loves the church anyway. Husbands are taught to love their wives in the same way; that is, realistically, recognizing her weaknesses and shortcomings, and loving her in spite of them. But some grooms enter marriage thinking they have

married a perfect person who has not one fault or weakness. After a short while of married life, he then sees that his wife — like himself — does have a few shortcomings; he sees that she is not absolutely perfect. He is then disillusioned and unhappy. Many times this disillusionment becomes the ground for a divorce. At least it becomes the ground of unhappiness for those who will not grow up and view the matter realistically. Then, please note that Christ loved the church in a sacrificial way. He gave Himself up for it. This is the way husbands should love their wives. Selfishness is at the heart of most unhappiness in marriage. Christ also loved the church in a purposeful way; that is, His love had a purpose, a goal, an aim. Just so, the love of a husband for his wife should have a goal, a purpose, an aim. The goal of Christ was that he might present the church to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing. Every husband ought to have in mind the goal of bringing — or helping, I should say — his wife to walk more closely with God each day of her life. He should recognize that his marriage is an affair not only of the heart but also of the spirit. Also, Christ loved the church without reservation. He did not hold back his own life. Just so, Paul said that the man who loves his wife loves himself. So intimate is the husband-wife relationship that the two become one flesh. Paul said no man ever hated his own body. To learn how to truly love others, we should study how we love ourselves. So close is the relationship between husband and wife, when he loves his wife, he loves himself. Man needs the tenderness and sentimentality which woman can give him. He needs the atmosphere she provides. Men without any women do not present a desirable atmosphere. During war, when men are separated from their wives and are placed where there are no women at all, the atmosphere is quite different from what it is where there are women. There is a loss of deli-

cacy, a loss of beauty, a loss of refinement, a loss of tenderness. On the other hand, women need the strength, the courage, the independence, the leadership of men. Just as men and women need one another physically, they need one another emotionally. Each complements the other. Each provides something the other needs. We also need one another spiritually. But sometimes marriages fail because husbands do not love their wives in the way Christ loves the church. Perhaps if men would begin to do this, wives would be more willing to submit themselves unto their husbands.

That brings me to the last point which I wish to discuss on this topic this evening. *Some marriages fail because the wife will not submit herself to the leadership of her husband as the Bible teaches her to do.* When a wife will not submit, then the husband cannot be the leader he should be. When people will not listen to what God tells them, the result is unhappiness. And certainly there is much unhappiness in the world because of failure over this one point.

May I close with an appeal to let love come into your lives. Let love grow and grow as the days and years come and go. Somewhere at some time, I read a good statement about love. Whoever it was who wrote the statement, said something about like this — this is not an exact quotation — love is joy singing; peace is love resting; long-suffering is love enduring; and gentleness is love's true touch. Love forms the very foundation of the life that God would have us live. Certainly it is the basis of marriage as God would have it. Indeed, *marriage is for those who love one another and God!* It is for those who love one another realistically, without reservation, and sacrificially. It is for those who love God with all of their heart, soul, mind and strength. Those who marry without these qualifications will have less than an ideal marriage. In fact, I am sure

it is truth to say; to the extent that the two partners in a marriage fail to truly love one another and God, to that extent their marriage fails to be what God would have it to be. Yes, marriage is for those who truly love one another and God. It provides a relationship by which two people may best help one another to walk with God — and so go to heaven when this life is over — and by which they can best bring true happiness and joy to one another as on this earth they live.

III

MARRIAGE — THE PROFOUND SIGNIFICANCE OF "I DO"

This is a great audience tonight. This audience is here in spite of inclement weather and in spite of the fact that we have a City-Wide singing school going on across town. Of course, we would be happy to be cooperating with them in this special effort, but our own meeting interferes. I think this shows the great interest that people have in this subject. As I expressed just recently, I personally feel a great failure upon the part of preachers and elders in the church for not giving the young people in the church more instructions along this line. And even those of us who are already married, and perhaps have been married a good long while, need this study. I am certain that all of us here tonight, no matter how long we have been married, can improve ourselves as marriage partners. I have already pointed out that for a marriage to be what God would have it be, of necessity there must be *adequate persons*, because you cannot have *adequate partners* until you have adequate persons involved in the partnership. I cannot repeat all that has been said already in the two preceding sermons. I know we have many here tonight who have not been here before in this series, so relative to a few points, I will repeat some things from preceding sermons which I feel need repeating. Those of you who have heard the first two sermons will bear with me through these few repetitions. Perhaps it will do us good anyway to have these things repeated. There are young people in this audience tonight who are looking forward to the day when they themselves will be married. This is as God would

have it be. There are also men and women who have been married a long time. They need to look back to the day when they vowed their allegiance to one another. It does us good to go back and check up and remember just what we said and to remind ourselves as to what we committed ourselves. I am afraid that very often people go through the marriage ceremony without really realizing to what they are committing themselves. It has long been a practice of mine to discuss in detail the marriage ceremony with those who present themselves to me to be married. I do this because, as people stand before you to actually go through the ceremony, it is difficult for them to have their minds completely on all that is said. I think they need to fully understand what the ceremony says before they ever come to this time. So surely it would be a valuable thing for us to study the things that are found in the marriage ceremony itself. Tonight I am going to discuss the marriage ceremony which I myself ordinarily use when couples come to me to be married.

There are some mistaken views of the marriage vow, and there are some true views. I wish first of all, to take up *some of the mistaken views* because I think this will help us to understand better the true views. Recently, in a leading magazine, there was published a cartoon which depicted one worldly-wise young lady speaking to another one, and she was saying, "If I divorce him, I know he will have to give me a great deal of money in settlement, but, so far, I just haven't been able to get him to propose." Such an attitude is typical of the attitude which many people have toward the marriage vow that is to be taken. To them, marriage isn't something that is to be permanent at all, but *something to gain a selfish end*.

Another mistaken view is that of *viewing the ceremony*

only as a legal trifle: They regard it as a trifle which must be performed to legalize physical intimacy.

Still another mistaken view is this: *Some view the vow as a trifle which is the business only of the marriage partners*. They say it is their business and theirs alone if they decide to break these vows.

Others view the vow as *joining together two angels*, two beings who are absolutely perfect and who will never make a mistake, who will never have any problem with one another. Being absolutely committed to the idea that no trouble will ever arise, when conflict of any sort does arise, they are disillusioned. They then use this conflict as grounds to break up their marriage.

Some look upon the vow in *the opposite way*. They well know that trouble is coming, they do not expect anything else. So, when they marry, they already have in mind that they are going to use the trouble which arises as a ground or an excuse to break up their marriage.

Then, there are those who feel that *as long as one obeys civil law God will accept and bless their union*. This false theory has not only been taught by those out of the church but it has been taught and defended by some within the body of Christ. It has been taught by some who claim to be preachers of the gospel. We need to recognize tonight that the gospel of our Lord is addressed to every person on this earth and that all of us are accountable to God's law. All of us are amenable to the law of Christ, the gospel. (Mk. 16:15). Certainly everyone of us lives under God's instruction as pertains to marriage. All of these views that I have presented so far are false ones. Let's now look at the true views of the marriage vow. Let's look at some things which the marriage vow involves.

First of all, I suggest to you that *this vow involves others besides the bride and groom.*

In the first place, it involves *the Lord Himself*. In the nineteenth chapter of Matthew, Jesus said "What God hath joined together let no man put asunder." And God joins only partners who are eligible to be married according to His law. (Matthew 19:1-12). If either one or both of the partners who is presenting himself for marriage is not eligible, then that marriage becomes an adulterous union. Everyone of us should recognize that in the marriage vow, not only are we and our partner involved, but God himself is involved. God's law governs marriage, for He instituted it. And the law of man, either in the church or out of it, must not contradict or set aside the law of God. We must recognize that God is a party to the covenant that is made in any and every marriage between eligible partners. This is not a mere human contract that can be broken or torn up as one might tear up a piece of paper, but this is a solemn covenant or agreement before God to which God Himself is a party.

It not only involves God, it also involves *the community and the nation*. "Righteousness exalteth a nation but sin is a reproach to any people." (Proverbs 14:34). Our nation is suffering the destruction of its moral fibre because of a loose attitude toward marriage and the relationship between men and women. And please note this: because it does involve the community and the nation, it should be announced publicly; that is, the intention to be married should be announced publicly and well in advance of the time of the marriage. One should not be in such a rush to be married that he cannot publicly announce his intentions to form this important union. Marriages should be performed publicly so that all can know. They should not be announced at some later time.

Here is another important point: *Marriage should be performed in the community where the two parties are known.* What others think about our actions — especially what our friends and loved ones think — is a strong deterrent against evil. This is why marriages should take place where the bride and groom are known.

Marriage also involves families of the bride and groom. In a very serious way, it involves them. And hard must be the heart of the person who would say that what he does is his own business and it does not involve his own mother and father or his brothers and sisters. Our marriage does involve our parents.

Marriage also involves the children who will be born to the union. Nothing is more influential in the shaping of the character, the personality, and the life of a child than his parents. Usually, the fact of delinquent children points back to the fact of delinquent parents. The first thoughts and feelings of a child are molded by its parents. Whether or not a child receives the love, the kindness, the discipline, and training it needs depends upon its parents. Who then could be so foolish as to say, "We are getting married. We are the only ones involved. It is our business and ours only. Let everyone else stay out of our way?"

In the second place, I suggest to you that the marriage vow, in the highest sense, *involves one's committing himself to leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife.* The Bible teaches "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife, and they two shall be one flesh." But many people who take this vow that is clearly implied in the marriage ceremony do not pay much attention to it. Instead of leaving father and mother and cleaving to their marriage partner, some people try to be parts of two households. They continue under

the domination of parents rather than truly — in the fullest sense — establishing their own home. Such action causes trouble many times, and, at times, causes the marriage to disintegrate. Young people, when you get married, continue to love, honor, and respect your parents; continue to respect and carefully weigh their advice. But remember, you have established a new home, a new family, and you must conduct that new home as such. Cleave to one another.

I suggest to you, in the third place, *some history that is involved in the vow*. When young people come to me to be married, I talk to them about this history. In doing so, I hope to impress upon the minds of those who are entering marriage the wonderful history that is behind their coming to this point themselves. So let us note something of the history of marriage. First, I point out that it was instituted by the Lord Himself in the Garden of Eden. The Lord saw that it was not good for man to be alone so He caused a deep sleep to come upon man, and He took a rib from man and formed woman and gave her unto man as a helper who was fit for him; that is, a helper or a counterpart who was designed to give man what he needed to make him complete.

As we continue on down in history, we see that marriage was honored and immorality condemned in the law which God gave through Moses at Mt. Sinai.

Marriage was upheld and honored by Jesus himself in the Sermon on the Mount and also in the writings of the apostles and prophets of the New Testament.

In the fourth place, I suggest that *the marriage vow involves some very serious matters*. Since marriage was instituted by God, and since its history dates back to man's beginning, and since God's laws, not merely the laws of

man, regulate it, then the consequences of entering marriage are great indeed and long-lasting. In fact, other than the union with our Savior, it is the most solemn, the most serious, the most intimate, the most tender relationship into which human hearts can enter. We all have very dear friends on this earth. As profound and great as are some of our friendships, as great and profound is the love between parents and children, there is no relationship in this life, other than the relationship with our Lord, that can compare with the relationship of husband and wife. Parent and child are not one as are husband and wife. "They two shall become one flesh." So solemn and serious is this union that like the union of our body and spirit should be severed only by the hand of death. (Romans 7:1-4). Therefore, friends — especially young people — let me urge you to recognize the teaching of Almighty God that marriage is not to be entered lightly or thoughtlessly. For in entering marriage, one may very well be making the decision that will determine not only his happiness or unhappiness in this life, but he may be making the decision that will determine his eternal destiny. Of course, one should not allow his companion to interfere with his responsibilities to God, but sometimes folks are not strong enough to overcome the temptation to please one's wife or husband rather than God. (Luke 14:15-24). Sometimes a woman strives to please her husband rather than God. Paul warned against this. Sometimes a person will become unfaithful to God in order to please his companion. (I Corinthians 7:33). I have even known of members of the Lord's church, people purchased by the blood of Christ, who started going to night clubs and engaging in drunkenness and other things of this kind. They did such in order to try to go along with their husband or wife, thinking that perhaps they could thus influence that companion to repent of his sin and become a Christian. How anyone could so reason

is beyond my ability to understand. The greatest influence on any companion is not the degrading of oneself, not the lowering of Christian standards, but the upholding of those standards, as Peter taught in I Peter 3:1, 2. Peter taught that the wife may by her manner of life lead her husband to become a Christian. Peter meant a life of godliness, of consecration and dedication to the Lord! But some people do not have the spiritual strength to do this. There are many things involved in the decision of a Christian to marry a person who is not a Christian. Lack of time forbids my discussing it in any detail tonight but you need to carefully and prayerfully consider what the results may be before you finally make the decision to join yourself to one who is not a member of the Lord's Church.

In the next place, I suggest that *marriage involves covenant and commitment*. I want to emphasize and underline the word *commitment*. So let us now consider the details of the vow itself. So far we have been discussing what is ordinarily given as introductory material which sets the stage for the marriage vow itself. Here is the first statement in the vow: "Do you John *take* this woman?" The marriage vow involves a commitment of *taking*. This involves a taking with whatever strengths and weaknesses one's companion has. It involves taking this woman *voluntarily*; it is a matter of the will as well as of the emotions. Each partner has made up his mind that the other partner is not perfect. This recognition precludes one's later saying, "Well, I thought she was perfect, but she is not, so I am going to divorce her."

The next commitment in the vow is: "To be your lawful *wedded* wife." To be wedded implies *oneness*. Jesus said, "They shall be no more twain but one flesh." And Paul said in Ephesians, chapter 5, that men ought to "love their wives as their own body. He that loves his wife loves him-

self." Right on down further in Ephesians, chapter five, Paul said, "This mystery is great, but I speak in regard of Christ and the Church." The relationship of Christ and the church is indeed a great mystery, but Paul referred to the mystery of the relationship between husband and wife and how this relationship explains the relationship of Christ and the church. In fact, Paul said that a man who loves his wife loves himself, and that no man ever hated his own flesh but he nourishes and cherishes it. Could language make anything more clear than the oneness of husband and wife? The vow to take a woman to be one's lawful wedded wife implies not only oneness it also implies *joining*: And please note who does the joining: "What *God* hath joined together let not man put asunder." *God* does the joining. However, if either of the marriage partners is not eligible, if either of them has been married before and his first companion has not either died or been unfaithful (in a physical way), then he is not eligible to be a marriage partner. If either one of the partners is in this condition, then the union is an adulterous one. As Jesus taught "if any man puts away his wife *except* for fornication, and marrieth another, committeth adultery." And he that marrieth her that is put away commits adultery." (Matt. 19:9). One might as well — so far as God is concerned—just take up company with someone as to go through a legal ceremony when he is not eligible in the sight of God to be married. So, to take this vow implies a recognition that God joins marriage partners — much like two pieces of metal are welded or wedded together.

It further implies that the joining is permanent and not subject to man's dissolution: ". . . let not *man* put asunder." But I plan to talk more just a little bit later on this point.

Then we have this statement in the ceremony: "To have and to hold." That is to be one's own, to be one's possession, bringing with it privilege, responsibility, and liberty — liberty with limitation — to *possess* in the fullest sense of the word, in such fashion as to enhance the spiritual lives of both. Since I discussed in some detail last evening the fact that marriage is not primarily physical, mental, or emotional, but is primarily and fundamentally spiritual, I shall say very little about this point at this time. Paul, in speaking of Christ and the church, pointed out that the Lord's love for the church was a purposeful love: ". . . that he might present the church a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing . . ." Just so, a husband should love his wife for the purpose of elevating her spiritually. This is the fundamental purpose in marriage: that two people may so weld their lives together that they may help one another to appreciate the spiritual values of life, to help one another to enjoy happiness in this life, and to help bring each other closer and closer to God as the days and years come and go.

The next statement in the ceremony is, ". . . from this day forward." To have and to hold *from this day forward*. This part of the ceremony emphasizes the permanency of the committal one makes when he takes the vow. To fully understand this, one must also consider the statement in the vow: ". . . till death do us part." When one takes the vows of marriage, he thereby commits his life to be joined with that of his partner until death parts them. Let no one take this lightly. The prophet Malachi taught that God hates covenant-breakers, those who deal treacherously with the wives of their youth.

The next statement of commitment in the marriage ceremony is this: ". . . to live together after *God's* ordinance." This means that each partner promises to be governed by

God's instruction as found in the Bible. It should be obvious, even from a very casual observation, that few people realize what they are saying when they take this vow. I wonder how many people have stood before preachers of the gospel and others and have had this question put to them, "Do you take this woman to be your lawful wedded wife, to have and to hold, to live together after God's ordinance," without any real understanding of the life to which they were committing themselves. This means that one has promised to live under God's instructions and directions. To fully commit oneself to this vow, would demand that one immediately begin to live, as best he could, according to the instructions of the Bible. Of course, no man is going to be a perfect husband; that is, exactly what *God* would have him to be. But one does commit himself to live as a Christian who is striving constantly to elevate both himself and his wife to be what God would have them to be, and to recognize that in every relationship of life he is to be governed by the word of God. 'At the same time, this vow commits one to exclude the regulations of other people. It excludes one from being dominated by the regulations of men, or even by one's own whims and fancies.

The next statement in the ceremony is: "... and do you promise to *love* her ...". I have already mentioned that in Ephesians five Paul taught that the love of a husband for his wife should be like the love which Christ has for the church. How did Christ love the church? Before Christ shed His blood that the church might be His bride, did He say that the church would be made up of people who had no weakness whatever? No, he looked at the people realistically and knew they were sinners. He recognized their imperfections. So Christ loved the church *realistically*, recognizing weaknesses. Just so, when people take this vow and promise to love one another, if it is done with

understanding, it is done with the recognition that they are not marrying a person who has no weakness and no sin. Each must learn to live with the weaknesses of the other, while each seeks to overcome his weaknesses.

Then, Christ loved the church *sacrificially*. He gave his life for it. (Eph. 5). This is the kind of love a husband should have for his wife. He should be willing to sacrifice himself for her good. Many husbands are selfish.

Then, let me point out that Christ loved the church *purposefully*: "that he might present the church to himself." This teaches us that the primary aim of marriage upon this earth is *spiritual* — not physical, not mental, and not emotional. These all have their part to be sure, but the primary purpose of marriage is spiritual: each is to help the other in living the Christian life. Men are to love their wives purposefully. They are not to regard them as mere *things* to be used to satisfy mere physical lust. Rather, wives are to be recognized as *persons* to be loved and respected for the dignity of their person, for their worth in the sight of God, and for what God intends and wishes them to be and to become.

Note, in the next place, that Christ loved the church *wilfully, deliberately* and voluntarily. Christ said no one took His life from Him, but he laid it down of his own free will. Just so, men should love their wives voluntarily and be willing to voluntarily sacrifice themselves for the good of their wives.

Now, let us note that Christ loved the church *absolutely*. He did not withhold anything needful from the church, and He does not now withhold anything needful from the church. People learn of absolute love by coming to regard their wives or husbands as God would. "He that loveth his wife loveth himself," said Paul when something good

happens to me, I am sad, because I *love* myself. In every situation in life, I want others to try to understand me and why I do what I do. When I do wrong, I want others to be tender, kind, and forgiving. When we approach the zenith of absolute love, we regard our wives as so truly a part of ourselves and so truly identified with ourselves that when we love them we love ourselves. Likely, there is no better way to understand absolute love than to think of how we love ourselves. Then we must remember the Bible teaches that when we love our wives we love ourselves.

The next statement in the marriage ceremony is: "Do you promise to love her and to *honor* her?" ". . . to *honor* her." This means to show great respect for her as a person and for her dignity as a creature of God, and for her worth in the sight of the Lord. Some men do not honor their wives. Rather, they criticize and ridicule them in front of others. It is most distressing to see a husband or wife ridicule their loved one in front of other people. Why will some criticize and ridicule? Why will some pay no attention to the wishes of their partner and regard them as a mere *thing* to be used for their own selfish purposes rather than the *person* that they are in the sight of God.

Now, the next part of the vow is: "Do you promise to *cherish* her?" That is, to hold her dear; to treat her tenderly, and to nurture her to higher and higher levels?

Men do not *cherish* mere tools. As long as a wife is viewed as a mere tool, she will not be truly cherished.

As a definite part of this pledge to love, honor, and cherish, there is the great question as to when — or at what times and conditions — this pledge is to be carried. At all times is the answer! During the ceremony, the preacher actually asks, "Do you promise to do this? Do you promise to love, to honor and to cherish your wife both in sickness

and in health?" Young people, when you take this vow, do so realizing that though your beloved may now be healthy, with nothing wrong with her body, she may soon be gravely ill. Realize that she may for years need almost constant care and be unable to perform the normal functions of a wife. You should enter marriage with your eyes open and realize what you are saying when you go through the marriage ceremony.

"In sickness and in health, in prosperity and in adversity." Things may go well with you financially, or they may go very poorly. We are living today in an extremely materialistic world. Our own nation, I suppose, is as materialistic as any nation on this earth. It is indeed disturbing to see how much influence rich people and "glamorous" stars of stage, screen, and television influence our young people. Many of these are very immoral. Yet, at times we find professing Christians who seem to know more about them and their lives than they do about the Apostles of Christ. Some are greatly influenced by the lives, by the standards, and by the aims and desires of such people. Many times when young men do not make the amount of money that young ladies have in mind when they get married the girls are disappointed. This causes some to become unhappy, and the result often is a broken marriage. I read just the other day a short article in which the writer described what to him was one of the greatest marriages with which he was acquainted. The couple was then very elderly, but they told about how very, very poor they were when they were first married. Yet they were happy. Today it seems that many young people think they should begin marriage with just as much furniture, just as big a house, and just as fine a car as mother and daddy had after they had been married 30 or 40 years. Young people should realize that many of these things come after long years

of sacrifice and hard work. Things which come too easily and too quickly are not usually appreciated anyway.

Let us now note that we take this vow to love, honor and cherish one another in prosperity and in adversity — and also “in *happiness* and in *sorrow*.” Young people, you may be very happy, things may go along just as you would like for them to, but very likely there will come a time when trouble, affliction or adversity of some kind, even tragedy will come into your life. Then will come a great test of your marriage. However, adversity may weld you together in a way that you have never been before. Trouble may be stepping stones to lead you to higher levels of spiritual life and closer fellowship with God.

Then, we consider part of the vow, “. . . do you promise to keep yourself to her so long as you both shall live?” When one marries he gives his body to his companion. The husband gives his to his wife and the wife gives hers to her husband. It is no longer theirs to make a decision as to physical intimacy. The wife then has authority over the body of her husband and the husband has the authority over the body of the wife. Neither partner should ever — without valid reason, such as illness — withhold himself from the other. In fact, in I Cor. 7, Paul calls withholding fraud. And for a marriage partner to take his body and join it to that of another person could be well compared to the realm of finance when one takes for his own use that which belongs to another and over which he did not have the authority as to use. When a bank teller takes money from the bank and uses it as if it were his own money, he does wrong. Just so, it is wrong for a marriage partner to so act in the realm of marriage.

Please note these lessons from I Cor. 7, the first five verses: (1) Paul recognizes that people need instruction

and counsel about the physical side of married life. It is, therefore, not wrong to give it, but it is right to give it. (2) The union of man and woman in marriage is right, it is honorable, Hebrews, Chapter 13. Outside of marriage it is *wrong*, it is *sinful*, and we in the church of our Lord need to stand up (in the midst of a world that has gone mad with the idea of being neutral and of turning everything into gray — with nothing being white or black) to cry as loudly as we know how to cry and call men back to the moral standards set forth in the Word of God. (3) The physical relationship is not only good in marriage, it is wrong to seek to eliminate it. In fact, it is fraud to try to eliminate it. And many people fall into temptation and commit adultery because their marriage partner has failed in the physical relationship. The so-called holy attitude which discounts and disregards the needs of one's partner is disobedience to God. It may be that the person whose companion has been guilty of adultery is often himself not free from blame in this matter. If he has contributed to the sin of his partner, I'm sure they're not free of blame. The idea that men are more holy because of a more celibate life has no foundation in the word of God. The idea of a celibate priesthood which cannot marry is completely without foundation in the word of God. Rather, marriage is a beautiful relationship, as I have already explained in some detail this evening. Sex, the "added language" which was given to man by God to be spoken only by those who are married, is an expression of love which is more *flexible*, more *expressive*, and more *profound* than mere human speech for the expression of one's feeling of love. However, you must remember that even this physical relationship must be primarily a spiritual one; that is, it is primarily a spiritual relationship. The marriage relationship is *not* as some religious people would have us to believe: (1) just for the purpose of bearing children and (2) must be re-

frained from when this is not the purpose. This is erroneous thinking. Paul makes it clear in I Cor. 7 that we must not defraud one another or be apart except on occasions when, by mutual consent, the partners wish to give themselves to prayer. Paul said that such separation should not continue long, but man and wife should soon come back together again lest they be tempted because of their incontinency.

The frequency of the sexual relationship is not specified in the scriptures. Sometimes couples greatly differ in their needs as regards this matter. But the Bible provides the answer to what otherwise would be a very perplexing problem. From my experience in marriage counseling and from my research in reading what professional counselors have said, I conclude that this is a point of great unhappiness for many couples. But the Bible provides the key to happiness. All anyone has to do is just heed the instruction of God's word. Love, when it is present, leads each person in the marriage relationship to lovingly consider the other's desires and the needs of the other. Each remembers that the other has the authority over the other's body, and a weak desire upon the part of one partner does not lessen responsibility to render "due benevolence" to the other. Paul did not discuss this matter in detail, but he made it plainly clear that each is to render to the other "due benevolence." Each is to give to the other his or her conjugal rights. A loving partner, even when he or she has little desire, will not allow this to degenerate into mere duty or mere acquiescence, and certainly it will not be done grudgingly, for both God and man (including woman) love cheerful givers. Amber Blanco White made this statement "To be indifferent to the physical expressions of love, still more to dislike it, or to feel that it is in some way shameful, is neither superior nor virtuous nor refined; it is a symptom

of mental illness or maladjustment." Another expert said that there is an increase in frigidity (that is among women) and pure lust (among men) because there is a decline in spirituality. This is true because every phase of marriage is fundamentally spiritual. An increase in frigidity or coldness in women and an increase in pure lust or selfishness among men has come to pass because there is a decline in spirituality. Someone has given this illustration of marriage: it might be pictured as a three-story building. The top story is the spiritual level, the level of worship. The middle story is the mental or emotional level. The bottom level is the physical level. If the top level, the spiritual level, is not what it should be, then this failure will seep down into the second floor and affect the mental and emotional life of the partners. If the mental and emotional life is not right, it will seep down into the bottom level and affect the physical life of the partners. It will affect their sex life, so, if the spiritual life is not right then the physical life, the sexual relationship, will not be right. The spiritual life helps the physical life to be what it should be, and in the same way, the physical helps the spiritual life to be what it should be. This is true because when men and women enjoy this relationship in the way God has intended, then it helps them to higher levels in spiritual matters.

Now for the final point: ". . . so long as you both shall live." Note that this does not say, "so long as your partner does not cross you," or, "so long as you may be compatible," or "So long as you do not see someone else who attracts you." Our young people are being brought up on this very stupid statement "I saw someone else, and I fell in love. I couldn't help myself. I just had to divorce my husband and marry him." They wrongly use one of the greatest gifts God gave to man in attempting to justify their evil. Please

understand, young people, and those of us who are already married, that marriage involves the promise to keep oneself to this one person only — *so long as both shall live!* The prophet Malachi, in the second chapter of that book said to those who were dealing treacherously with the wives of their youth, "God hates putting away." God hates covenant-breakers, and when we enter marriage, we are entering or making a covenant. The story is told of a North Dakota judge who once said to a young couple, "According to the laws of this state I must declare you free from the bonds of marriage, but I remind you that probably on the books of Almighty God you are still husband and wife." Let everybody in this audience think about this statement. Let everyone think seriously and prayerfully about it. Men may devise some way for man to set aside their marriage, but, while they do so, let them remember that in the book of God, at least in the book of His remembrance of these matters, they are still husband and wife. County clerks keep a record of those who are married in their county. God has a record of every marriage. We may be sure of that.

Let us now consider some points in the vow that are peculiar to the husband. He is to provide the necessities of life, this is taught by implication. When a man vows to take a wife, he thereby makes a pledge to provide for his wife and children the necessities of life, food, clothing and shelter. He vows that he shall give her ruling, guidance, leadership, strength, independence, and loving consideration for her as the weaker vessel. He pledges himself to realize that his wife is more than a physical mate. He pledges himself to realize she is also a soul mate, a person, not a mere thing. He pledges himself to realize that her task in life, the task of being the queen of the home, is a great task. He pledges himself to realize that a great many

trying and serious problems will arise and be hers to cope with. He must recognize that her task is as great as our own.

Then there are some points in the ceremony that are peculiar to the wife. First, the wife promises "to obey." She promises to obey her husband, to be submissive to him. Wives, don't try to wear the trousers in your family. If you should succeed in doing this, you would be a loser. Your husband would be a great loser. Your children would be great losers; your children would suffer a great loss. They would suffer the loss of a real manly father and a real womanly mother. The story is told of a young couple who married. The bride had a reputation of being a "bossy" girl. When they arrived at the hotel and began to undress, the groom threw his trousers across the chair and told the bride to try them on. She protested but he insisted, so she put them on. After she got them on, he asked her if they fit. She said, "Why, you know they are much too large for me." So, he said, "Well, just see that you remember from now on just which member of this family those pants fit." This is a good lesson for every woman and for every man as well. Marriage ought not to be a battle to see who is going to be the leader. God has already decided this. He has told the husband to rule the wife, and He told the wife to obey, to be submissive to her husband. This does not mean that the man is to be an arrogant, ruthless, and selfish dictator. Remember, that we pointed out last evening that man's ruling of the wife is always to be in the light of his own *subjection to Christ!* This means that when man rules his wife, as Christ would have him to do it, it amounts to Christ doing it. This is why Paul said, "Wives be in subjection to your husbands as unto the Lord."

The wife should realize that the husband has the tremendous burden of facing the world and of providing for her

and the children. She should realize that she loves herself most by loving him, for in making him truly love her, she opens the road to great happiness.

Ordinarily, at the end of a marriage ceremony the bride and groom are asked if they would like to have their vow further sealed by the gift of a ring. Then the groom is asked to repeat something like this: "With this ring I thee do wed, and with all my worldly goods I thee endow." Husbands should not be miserly with their wives. Wives ought to have some freedom in the spending of money. At the same time, wives should try to use good judgment in spending. "With all my worldly goods and with my *heart's faithful affection I thee endow.*"

And then the bride further seals her vow with the gift of a ring. She says "With this ring of pure gold, to symbolize *pure* love, and of one unending circle, to symbolize *unending* love, I pledge to you my fidelity and my endless devotion." One man, as he thought back over the marriage vow that he and his wife had taken, said, "I could by all rights sue my wife for non-emotional support." Of course, that might have also worked the other way. His wife might also have been able to have done that. But let us recognize that the husband may fail to support his wife with the material needs of this world, the wife may fail to support her husband emotionally and spiritually.

Husbands and wives ought to pray together every day. They ought to read the Bible together every day. Husbands, let each of us pray that we may so live with our wives that they may never regret having married us. Pray that the Lord will help you to live up to God's measure of a man. Pray that the Lord will help the two of you to bear the loads of life together. Pray that He will help both of you to help the other walk closer to God and so help one another to go to heaven when this life is over.

IV

MARRIAGE — IS NOT FOR THE IMMATURE

I am deeply grateful for your presence here tonight for this fourth lesson in this series of studies on marriage. I am deeply thankful for the enthusiasm shown and for the response that has been made to these lessons thus far. You have been most encouraging in your response to these lessons. In fact, your response causes me to conclude that very likely we have not been doing what we should have been doing in instructing in this general field. Some have expressed the thought that it would be valuable to have these lessons, or similar ones, during a four-day period at least once a year. I believe this might be worthwhile. I am sorry that not all of you could be with us for all of these lessons. I know that we have some with us in our audience tonight who are here for the first time. We are certainly glad that you are here, but the lesson to be studied this evening is simply one lesson that fits into a total picture. It was a difficult thing to select five lessons out of all the lessons that are needed in the general field of the relationship of husband and wife, and no one can put into a single lesson all the things that need to be said. In fact, this cannot be done even in five nights. There may be something of a repetition of some of the things that have been said before — and those of you who have been here before will bear with us in this matter. There are many things that have already been said that will not be repeated tonight, but I wish they could be repeated for the benefit of those of you who have not been here before. Perhaps some of the things that will be said tonight will not mean as much to you as they would mean if you had been here for all of the series.

Tonight our study deals with this topic: "Marriage Is Not for the Immature." Many people are mature in physical development but are not mature otherwise. Sometimes they are immature in emotional development, and sometimes they are immature in spiritual development. The tragedy of this is that people reach physical maturity long before they reach maturity in these other realms, and this creates a real problem to those who are mature biologically and physically and who, from that standpoint, would be ready for marriage and perhaps have a strong desire for marriage, but who are not really ready otherwise. I appeal to the young people in this audience to recognize the importance of what we are speaking about tonight. Marriage is not a thing designed for the immature, and, to be successful in it, not just one, but *both* of the partners involved in it, must be mature physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. The causes of an unhappy marriage are very seldom found in anything physical. Once in a while people marry without realizing that they are not developed physically and are not really capable of performing the marital functions. But this does not happen very often. Unhappy marriages result from mental, emotional and spiritual immaturity. For this reason I have entitled this study: "Marriage Is Not For Babies." The sermon might be called: "Marriage Is Not For the Immature."

Some writers speak of a man as having four ages. They say these ages are chronological, physical, intellectual or mental, and emotional. To that four, I would like to add *spiritual*. Man has spiritual development as well as the others.

You might run into a fellow who is fifty years old chronologically, forty physically, sixty intellectually, fifteen emotionally, and ten spiritually. By that I mean: (1) it has

been fifty years since his birthday; (2) he has the physical stamina of forty years; (3) his mental development rates him at sixty; (4) he has the emotional development of an adolescent of fifteen; (5) and the spiritual development of a ten year old child.

It is clear, therefore, that the subject of maturity is a very broad one, and it is a very important one.

In this series, I am most concerned about emotional and spiritual development. They are the hardest to develop and are the most important to happy marriages.

All of us are acquainted with immaturity in adults. We all know people who are adults chronologically and physically but who are still children emotionally and spiritually. Likely, every one of us has at least a little of this in us. Likely, every one of us, at least once in a while, will lapse into a display of emotional immaturity — call it childishness if you like.

We should be able to recognize immaturity. We usually can do it very easily when we are observing others. This is true of spiritual immaturity. We can see it easily in others; it is hard to see it in ourselves. Luke 18:9-14 tells of a Pharisee who had difficulty in seeing his own faults. He could see the sins of another very easily.

To overcome immaturity and be happy in our marriages, we must be able to recognize immaturity in ourselves. After we recognize it, we must prayerfully seek to overcome it. Let us then consider some ways in which emotional and spiritual immaturity may manifest itself.

First, I suggest to you that emotional immaturity manifests itself in *selfishness*. A little child is selfish. He is wrapped up in himself. He cares little or nothing about the trials, troubles, sorrows, and needs of others. He is

more concerned about his own broken toy than he is about the burning down of his neighbor's house. He is more concerned about stubbing his own toe than he is about the cancer in the abdomen of his neighbor. How many of us husbands and wives have this kind of attitude? How many of us show this mark of immaturity. The husband had a hard day at the office. He therefore comes home whining and complaining about what a hard life he has. His poor wife has labored "like a dog" all day long, but he is not interested in her problems. She had four children to look after all day, and she had to do this in addition to her regular housework. But the husband is interested only in himself. His immaturity will cause unhappiness in that home. The wife will not get the love, the affection, the tenderness and consideration which she needs and deserves. Sometimes the wife is also immature. When both husband and wife are immature, then real trouble results.

Another mark of immaturity is *ingratitude*. The immature, childish person is not thankful for his blessings. A little child is not thankful. No matter how much he gets, he just takes it for granted. He feels the world owes him everything he gets — and more. A tired, sick mother can sit up all night with a sick baby but the baby is not grateful. In fact, he won't give it a thought. How many of us who are married show this much immaturity? How many of us are ungrateful no matter how much our companion does for us? Let each one of us strive to develop the habit of counting our many blessings. Be thankful for the love and devotion shown to you by your companion and *show* that gratitude. It doesn't hurt to say, "Thank you." In fact, it should be said *often*!

Another mark of immaturity is the *demand to have one's own way*. This is much like the first mark of immaturity I talked about. Yet, I think this point deserves a

separate notation. A little child wants to have his own way. When he doesn't get his way, he usually becomes angry and throws a tantrum. He may fall down on the floor and kick his feet or bump his head on the floor. Sometimes, people who are mature chronologically — by reason of years — are not mature emotionally. They still try to get what they want by "throwing a fit." A boss screams at his workers or pounds on the desk top. Immature husbands and wives, in a battle to see which one will have his way, scream and say cutting, wounding things to one another. Mature people do not act this way. How many teen-age marriages have broken up because of this?

Another mark of immaturity is to *have little or no sense of responsibility or obligation*. If the house is in disarray, a little child feels no obligation, as a member of the family, to straighten things as they should be. If a mother and child are down-town shopping, and the mother's arms are full of packages, the child has no sense of obligation to "pull his own weight." He has no sense of responsibility. He wants his mother to carry him in addition to all her packages. Learning to bear your own burden is a part of growing up. It is a mark of maturity. Husbands as well as wives are guilty of immaturity. Of her husband, a wife one time said, "When he is well he expects to be treated as if he is a king; when he is sick, he expects to be treated as if he is a baby." Some wives may be like this.

Another mark of immaturity is *the habit of failing to finish what is undertaken*. Little children are guilty of this. They start a thing but soon grow tired of it and do not finish. Then they turn to something and go through the whole process again. Some husbands keep their families in a constant turmoil by their immaturity. Husbands, give your wives a greater sense of stability and security by being more mature in carrying to a finish what you

have undertaken. For one thing, don't be constantly jumping from one job to another.

Another mark of immaturity is the *inability to meet the conflicts and problems of life with good emotional reaction*. A child can be happy and contented until something happens which presents a real problem to him. Then he may react by an outburst of crying, of violent temper, or by falling down on the floor and kicking his heels. The mature person meets conflict with good emotion. When immature people get married, they react, with bad emotions to the conflicts which arise in marriage. This is why some husbands and wives scream at one another. It is why they argue, "fuss and fume" almost night and day. This is why the wife packs her bag and runs "home to Mama." This is why husbands slam the door and run to the nearest tavern to drink themselves into a drunken stupor. This is why some husbands and wives run to the arms of other people. They think they can resolve their conflict by making their companion unhappy, and, they reason, there is no better way to make them unhappy. Such illustrations could be multiplied almost to infinity. But how childish all such is! Husbands and wives should try to grow up. ". . . in mind be men," said Paul in I Corinthians 14:20. How much misery and unhappiness would be avoided and alleviated if husbands and wives would grow up and become mature emotionally. Learn to react to life's problems and conflicts with good emotions. Instead of being angry, jealous, envious, and belligerent, be of a good disposition. Be kind and gentle. Be of good will even when you feel your companion hasn't been fair, has not acted toward you as he or she should. Be willing to change your mind. Be willing to admit that you are wrong; that is, when you honestly see that you have been. Be willing to let your wife or husband have their way some. Study the twelfth chap-

ter of Romans and apply its truth to your own life. "Be ye kind one to another." "In honor prefer one another."

Those who are immature *think it is more blessed to receive than it is to give*. (Acts 20:35). The immature person is not interested in giving; he is interested in *receiving*! Such people care little about what the other person wants. They want what *they* want, and they want it now! Why can't we all see that the only way any of us will ever be truly happy is to learn how to bring happiness to *others*? Husbands and wives who have largely forgotten their own wishes are the ones who really enjoy life together. Study the Beatitudes in Matthew 5:1-13 and learn how to be happy. But most of us follow the Beatitudes rather poorly, don't we?

The immature are also characterized by *poor standards of judgment or evaluation*. A little child is unhappy if his playmate has a bigger piece of pie than he does. A teenager is unhappy if his pal has a later model car. Immature people set poor goals for themselves. They choose as their ideal persons those who are anything but ideal. Instead of a godly woman like Dorcas, as their ideal many teenage girls choose the moral degenerates of Hollywood, who travel over several continents together without benefit of wedlock. Instead of choosing for a life's companion one who is manly by Christ's standards, many immature youngsters choose the one who is "cute," or "popular," or who has a convertible, and so on and on we could go. Some women, after marriage, instead of appreciating a godly, hard-working faithful Christian husband, become dissatisfied because he is not rich and handsome like some men they read about in the magazines. Some men, instead of appreciating the godly, hard-working, faithful Christian wife, become dissatisfied because she is not as "glamor-

ous" ("cheap" is a much better word here) as the latest movie starlet to arrive on the Hollywood scene.

Husband and wives, don't be immature. No marriage can be happy with even one immature partner — much less with two such partners. Don't go around sour, irritable, unhappy, and grouchy because things don't go just the way you want them to go. Learn to *make today right!* If you do, every day will be right. Determine that you are going to be happy today. Even beyond that, determine that you are going to be happy — and have a good disposition, not grouchy or complaining — *right now!* Make a practice of this. It will mean so much to your marriage. It will mean much to you. It will mean much to your husband or wife.

Another mark of immaturity is to *have a poor way of trying to get love* or rather I should say, to be loved. The immature wife or husband makes up his or her mind in advance of a situation just how the companion should do in that situation. They say to themselves, "If he loves me, he will do thus and so," when the action they have envisioned is no proof of love at all. "If he loves me, he will volunteer to take me home to mother's on the holiday which he will soon have." When he doesn't so volunteer, the poor husband is in the "doghouse." And it works the same in principle with the husband. Sometimes married people try to get love by being grouchy or throwing a tantrum or picking a fight. But, really, can't we all see this is absurd? I John 4:19 gives us the answer as to how to get love — how to be loved. The answer is *love!* Love your companion in order to be loved. *Show* your love. Quit *demanding* love and start *showing* it. Envision a marriage in which both partners did that. Any married people who do will surely get at least a little taste of heaven. Husbands, show consideration for your wife when she is tired

and depressed. You have rights but be willing to forego them. *Give love*, don't demand it! You wives, be willing to lovingly — not grudgingly — show your affection to your husband even when you are tired. When he learns that you do this, he will likely not be so demanding. He will likely be won by your love to show the consideration which he should. Both husbands and wives know many ways to show their love to one another. If they don't show them, it is likely because of immaturity. Go back and remember many of the things you did during your courtship days. Many of those acts of affection and thoughtfulness should be continued over into marriage. Wives, as well as maidens, like for their men to be gallant and thoughtful. Husbands, as well as bachelors, like to have their ladies affectionate, cheerful, and considerate. No one, not even a wife or husband, wants to be just taken for granted — like an old shoe around the house. So, may I urge husbands and wives to get love by loving. What a change this one thing could make in the lives of so many people.

Let us now turn our attention to the *marks which characterize those who are mature*. To be mature is to be able to meet the various situations which one meets in life with good emotional, mental, and spiritual response. I realize that this is a very general statement, but I hope that the further explanation which I shall give will clarify the matter. The marks of maturity which I shall give are certainly desirable — at least as I view the matter — and perhaps even essential to a happy marriage. Won't you consider them carefully and prayerfully?

To be mature, one must have *a minimum of intelligence*. A person who is mentally retarded cannot be an acceptable marriage partner or parent. One must have enough intelligence to learn certain things, and he must be able to continue learning to be an acceptable partner.

To be mature, one must have *a minimum of knowledge*. If the marriage partner is a man, he must know enough to make a living. He must be able to provide for his own. The man who fails to provide for his own is worse than an infidel. (I Timothy 5:8). If the marriage partner is a woman, she must know enough to care for the household in an acceptable manner. She must know how to care for children. She must know something of the relationships and responsibilities of marriage.

Independence is another mark of maturity. The Bible teaches that when a man marries, he is to leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife. (Matthew 19:5). However, immature people cannot follow this instruction. They continue in their attitude of dependence upon their father and mother. They cannot make decisions for themselves. They cannot assume the responsibilities which they should assume. They depend upon Mother and Daddy. They many times allow their parents to so interfere in their affairs as to render their happiness with their companion almost, if not absolutely, impossible. There are times and occasions when it is wise for young people (after they are married) to seek the advice of their parents, but no boy or girl should go into marriage with the idea that Mother and Daddy are still going to make their decisions for them. No boy should go into marriage with the idea that his father is going to support this new family. No boy is really ready for marriage until he can support his wife and whatever children may be born to the new union. No boy is ready for marriage until he is ready to assume the leadership of a new family, to make the required decisions, to provide the strength and the courage and the independence which is required of the head of a family. This does not mean that he cannot ask for advice and follow advice when it is received. The wisest of men at times

ask for and follow the advice of others. In fact, a mature person will not hesitate to ask for advice when he needs it. But he will then weigh that advice carefully and make his own decision. But many marriages have been wrecked because young people did not "leave father and mother"! Don't let this mistake wreck your marriage.

A Christian attitude toward sex is another mark of maturity. When a man marries, he should have a mature sense of the responsibilities which are now his. He has the responsibility of providing his wife with the necessities of life. The wife has the responsibility of keeping the house as it should be kept. Each has very definite responsibilities to the other. I have referred a number of times to Paul's instructions in I Corinthians 7. Mature, Christian people recognize and meet the responsibilities therein outlined. The mature, Christian person recognizes that in spite of the fact that the sex urge is strong, it is not the strongest urge within a man. It is not, as some would have us to believe, the motivation behind everything we do. Rather, as I have previously explained, it is a means of expressing love; it is a means of being loved. The fundamental motivation is not sex but the desire to love and be loved. This is a basic need of man. Without loving and being loved, man cannot be happy; he cannot be what he should be. So, I maintain that sex is not the basic motivation behind our deeds. It is simply the "added language" which God has given to husbands and wives by which they can say, "I love you," in a more expressive way than ordinary speech provides. Mature, Christian people do not look upon sex as something to "get." They look upon it as an *experience to share* with one's beloved. They look upon it as a means not only of *maintaining* their love but of *nourishing* it and causing it to *grow* and become even more meaningful. Mature, Christian people can handle sex with

a minimum of trouble and a maximum of pleasure. Maturity at this point involves knowledge of human anatomy — that of one's partner as well as one's own. It involves emotional maturity and usefulness. It involves spiritual maturity. I believe that the closer a man and wife are to God the closer they will be to one another — and that includes their life of physical intimacy. Apparently, some people look upon sex as a very unfortunate affair which has been more or less forced upon humanity. To such people, it is unmentionable and sordid. To such, to engage in it even in marriage is somewhat shameful. Some mothers, in seeking to build within their daughters an attitude which will guard them from pre-marital relations, largely impair the ability of their daughters to be the kind of wives which God would have them to be. Mothers, train your daughters in the sacredness of the purity of their persons, but also teach them the beauty and spiritual significance of married love in all of its aspects. Remember, God intends for the sexual relation to build up love between husband and wife and to help provide an atmosphere of love in which their children may grow to maturity.

On the other hand, there are some who think they are being "smart" when they look upon sex with an air of sophistication. Some people — and among them must be numbered college professors, philosophers, and some religious leaders — claim that what two adult people do in this matter is their own business — whether they are married or not. But the Bible teaches that God will judge adulterers. (I Corinthians 6:9-11; Galatians 5:19-21; Revelation 21:8). Such people not only face eternal punishment — if they do not repent and obey the Gospel (II Thessalonians 1:7-9) — but they bring utter misery upon themselves in this life. The testimony of those who have so lived is manifest proof of this. As such people have told of their

misdeeds, they have pointed out that such a life did not bring happiness which they thought it would when they set out upon it. Compare the feelings of Adam and Eve *after* they ate of the forbidden tree with their feelings *before* they ate of it. To live in disobedience to God — no matter what phase of life it may involve — is to bring sorrow down upon one's head. (Romans 6:23).

Marriage counselors and doctors tell us that almost fifty per cent of the married women who come to their offices never or almost never get any pleasure whatever out of the sexual relationship. Are such people happy? Decidedly not! In fact, doctors claim that such a relationship in the home can lead — and usually does — to emotionally caused illness. They actually become physically ill. Is this as God would have it? Certainly not! But when married partners are immature, when they are still childish in their attitudes and relations with one another, little else could be expected. Doctors further tell us that so-called “frigidity” in women is, many times, the fault of a thoughtless and selfish husband. Some women, in talking with marriage counselors and doctors, have complained that after marriage, their husbands have thought of nothing but themselves. Such is emotional immaturity manifesting itself in physical intimacy. When two people are emotionally and spiritually mature, they recognize that tenderness, love, unselfishness and other such qualities should manifest themselves in intimate life and thus render sex a means of enriching life and contributing in a large way to their pleasure in this life. The same attributes which mark a person as being mature in other phases of his life, also mark him as mature in his sexual life. This means that tenderness, kindness, sympathy, and understanding must underlie and motivate the physical intimacy of husbands and wives. Mature, Christian men and women do

not seek to gain their happiness at the expense of their companion. And those who do will likely see their home turned into a house of misery, grouching, fighting, and so on. When husbands and wives arrive at such maturity as will motivate them to seek first the pleasure and happiness of the *other*, then their intimate life will be as God would have it. Having these attitudes is a much broader thing than sex itself. Yet sex, properly handled, can contribute to the growth of these attributes. As the years come and go, truly mature, Christian husbands and wives are drawn closer and closer together by the rich experiences of their sexual life. As the years go by, they mean more and more to each other. Such experiences as I have just described will serve as a great barrier to guard against the many pitfalls which every marriage faces. But if the couple is immature, the immaturity will show itself here and, instead of being a source of strength to hold them together, it will become a sword to divide them!

Can you not see why I entitled this sermon: "Marriage Is Not For the Immature"? Indeed, marriage is not for babies — not for babies emotionally. When emotional babies get married, they almost always have trouble. Some weather the storm until they can both grow up, but many do not. They break up their home before either one of them has a chance to grow up. They should have waited until they were grown up before they married in the first place. *Marriage is not for babies!* And if you go ahead and marry before you are mature, don't say that you were not warned!

Another mark of maturity is the *willingness to try to make the other person happy*. Babies are concerned only about themselves. They do not care about who else may be unhappy. They want what they want when they want it. But when husband and wife are both motivated by the desire to make the other happy, then the marriage will be a

happy one. Each husband and each wife owes it to the other and to himself to try to make every minute of life just as pleasurable as they possibly can. No husband has the right to make his wife unhappy, and no wife has the right to make her husband unhappy — unless they are made unhappy by righteous and good things. When this attitude prevails in a home, you may be sure that happiness will also be there, including a happy sexual life. God Himself made men and women different — not just physically but emotionally as well. This difference provides each the opportunity of “giving in” just a bit to the other. When a husband’s desire for intimate relations is strong and frequent and the wife’s not so strong or frequent, this difference of desire should not become a ground for trouble and dissension. In fact, when the couple is both mature and Christian, such difference *will not* cause trouble. Rather, the two will use the difference to demonstrate their love for one another. Each will show loving consideration for the feeling and needs of the other. Each will know that they can trust the other not to make mere excuses but to be honestly and lovingly interested in doing what will bring the other the most happiness. Immature people — babies, if you will — will care little, if any, about the needs of the other. Their motivating thought will be: “What will make *me* happy? That’s what *I* am concerned about!” May you be guarded and kept from such a companion. Husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for it. (Ephesians 5:22f.). Wives are to “love their husbands.” (Titus 2:4).

Another mark of maturity is the *feeling of gratitude instead of self-pity*. Mature people are grateful for the blessings of life which our gracious Father in heaven constantly gives to all of us — even to those of us who are evil. At least He gives blessings to the evil while they live

on this earth. (Matthew 5:43-48). Immature people — babies — usually feel that they have not received what they have coming to them. They constantly have a complaint on their lips about something they have missed which they feel they should have. They feel sorry for themselves. They are full of self-pity. This self-pity guards their hearts against gratitude. Thus they are unhappy and, in turn, make those around them unhappy. Neither a husband nor a wife who is filled with self-pity will be a fit companion for marriage. A wife or husband who is always afraid that they are giving a little more than they are giving will always be unhappy. Dare to turn yourself loose with the idea that you are going to make your companion happy and be thankful for the opportunity. Count your many blessings. Name them one by one. See what *God* has done for you. See what *your companion* has done for you. See what *your brethren* have done for you. See what *your friends and neighbors* have done for you. See what *mankind* in general has done for you. And then: quit complaining! Be happy. Be happy right now. Right this minute be happy! The New Testament teaches us to be happy. Study Matthew 5:1-12 and Philippians 4:4-4.

But now I come to the mark of maturity which is truly fundamental to all the rest of the marks. A mark of maturity is to *be filled with Christian love*. I have talked about this some in preceding lessons, but now I wish to give a more detailed study of it. I am speaking of true Christian love. The love for one's companion that causes one to view that companion not as a thing to be used for one's own selfish purposes but as the person who is loved and cherished as one's life companion. Love causes one to view his companion as the Word directs: not for what he is at present — a person with worth and dignity in the sight

of God — but for what he can be in the future: a person walking *closer* to God.

If husbands and wives would truly love one another, the rest of the problems would, in time, take care of themselves. The Lord taught that on two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets: love of God and love of neighbor. Note please that one is to love God with all of his heart, soul, mind, and strength. And one is to love his neighbor as himself. This is a point worthy of long and careful study by each and every one of us. Study Mark 12:29, 30. All of the instruction given in the Law and the Prophets may be classified under one of these two commandments. So no matter whatever else we may talk about in the matter of maturity, when we talk about love, we are talking about the very foundation of the whole matter. This gives us some insight into the reasons why love is so great, why it is greater than faith and hope as Paul said in I Corinthians 13:13. Why is love so great? Because it is so basic. Out of love grows right action. Out of love grows obedience to God. Study John 14:15 and I John 5:3. Those who truly love God will obey Him. This is one reason why love is so great.

Another reason why love is great is: *without it other great things are worthless*. Paul said, "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am become as sounding brass, or a clanging cymbal." (I Corinthians 13:1). If you were the greatest orator this world has ever seen, but you spoke without love, then all of your speaking would be worth nothing in the sight of God. It is the heart of love which God wants — not the silver-tongued orator. A great intellect without love is worth nothing in God's sight. A head full of knowledge is worthless without a heart full of love. One may have such faith as to cause him to "move mountains," but if he doesn't have

love it is nothing. One may give away all of his money and goods, but if the action is not motivated by love, then it is worthless in God's sight. Even if we were to give our lives to take the Gospel to a foreign land but did so without love, it is nothing. Even if you give your body to be burned but did it without love, then it is worthless. Thus you can see how important love is.

Again, love is great because *with it the smallest, most insignificant things become great*. If a husband buys his wife a mink coat, a diamond ring, a mansion, and a fine automobile, but she knows that he does not really love her, then his gifts amount to little. The wife is not impressed with such gifts — not even if it be a yacht which costs several hundred thousand dollars. But on the other hand, if a groom gives his wife the band off of a cigar for a wedding ring — because he can do no better at the time — the wife will adore that cigar band *if* — and note this “if” — if she truly believes that he loves her! You have often heard it said, “It is not the gift but the thought behind the gift that really counts.” Well, let me tell you: truer words were never spoken. Love covers a multitude of sins and shortcomings. Love puts a glow on a gift or an action that simply cannot be seen by the observer who does not truly love. The true lover can put a glow on a gift or an action that the person who does not love cannot put.

A little boy may gather up a handful of “stink weeds” and bring them to his mother for her birthday and even though they may be offensive to others, to her they smell better than any rose that anyone else might give her. Love really counts. On the other hand, if a man gives a woman expensive orchids and the woman feels that his intentions are somewhat less than honorable, she cannot think very highly of his gift. She knows then that his gift was a selfish one.

If a husband brings home a box of candy for his wife and gives it to her with such action and such tone of voice as to make it clear that he does not really love her, then that gift does not mean very much to her. Love is important. There is nothing so important in the building of a happy marriage.

Love is great because when you have it, *you will do the other things you should* do, provided you know what to do. The man who truly loves his wife does not know of something that is good for his wife and makes her happy, and then refuse to do it — nor does he simply fail to do it through laziness. When husbands and wives truly love one another, they seek to make every moment of the life of their companion just as happy as possible. They do not wish to make one moment of that life unhappy or miserable. How important is love! How each of us should strive to build it in his own life.

Love is great because *it has such transforming power*. The Gospel of Christ, which is the story of God's love for man, has the power to transform a degraded drunkard into a servant of righteousness. True love has the power to transform fighting, bickering, fussing, fuming husbands and wives into people who can build their marriage into a happy one. Husbands and wives, let me appeal to you right now: don't give up on your marriage! I don't care how long you have been fighting, your marriage can be saved. Not only that, it can become a happy one. You can do this if you will only learn the meaning of love and how it applies in our lives. The Gospel can transform blasphemers of God into preachers of the Gospel. It can also transform the "hell" of your marriage into the "heaven" which your marriage will be if you will only listen to the Word of God, the Bible. Read I Corinthians 6:9-11 and learn something of the power of the Gospel to change the

lives of men and women. Some homes — like some people — are virtually civil wars. What a pity. What a loss. What a loss of happiness. How destructive of the spiritual life of those involved. How the poor little children suffer. Remember the words of Milton, "Love is the golden key which opens the palace of eternity." Love opens the palace to eternity by opening the door to a life of happiness on this earth.

But now, let us turn our attention to Paul's explanation as to how we will act when we have our hearts filled with love. If you don't act the way Paul outlined here, then you do not have love in your heart.

First, Paul says, "Love suffereth long." When a man loves his wife, he will suffer long. This means that he will control resentment in the face of provocation. He can endure provocation without being filled with resentment. Love guards one from harboring ill-feeling and sudden outbursts of irritability. What if a tape recorder had been placed in your home for the past six months and had recorded the conversations which took place between you and your companion? What then? Would you like for that tape to be played publicly? Would it show that there is a spirit of anything but long-suffering? How many times have unkind words come from your lips? How many times have you intended for your words to hurt rather than to heal?

Then Paul said, "Love is kind." Love causes us to be good-natured. It causes us to be happy, full of joy, gentle, and affectionate. It causes us to wish other people well. It guards us from being sour and morose. It keeps us from wearing our feelings on our sleeves and becoming offended at everything that happens. When we truly love our companion, we are courteous. We do not wish to hurt

the feelings of our companion. And so everyone of us should know that just as soon as we fall into irritability and being unkind and cutting in our speech and our actions, then we are no longer under the motivation of love. To love is real maturity. Whatever else may be said about growing up, you have said it all when you have described what it really means to be under the domination and motivation of love.

“Love envieth not.” It would be difficult to imagine that a husband and wife would ever envy one another, but it is possible. Don’t let such happen in your home.

“Love is not puffed up.” Love causes us to be free of inward arrogance. It rids the mind of pride. It rids the mind of seeing for its own way. How many of us have had moments of sorrow, of frustration and of unhappiness in our home because each of us was striving for his own way. But love causes us to not vaunt ourselves. Paul said, “Love vaunteth not itself.” It keeps us from treating our companion with contempt, while we elevate ourselves and say of our own way, “This is it, and what you say is worth nothing.”

“Love does not behave itself unseemly.” Love keeps us from being betrayed into forgetfulness of what is due to others. Love causes us to avoid harsh language, the use of ridicule and innuendo. Rather, it brings a delicacy of feeling which shows itself in our behavior to others. It causes us not to have a “family voice.” It guards us from talking to our family in a harsh, criticising, ridiculing tone of voice while we sound like an entirely different person to others. In the same way, I do not like to hear a preacher have a “pulpit tone.” I like to hear him preach with the pronunciation he uses in ordinary conversation. None of us, in our homes, should have a “family voice” and a “com-

pany voice." I wonder: how many of us do? If we love one another and if we are truly under the influence of love then we will not have such a thing.

"Love seeketh not its own." Love causes us not to be selfish; it guards us against seeking our own good at the expense of others. Those who love do not say, "*I* want this, and I do not care what *you* desire or what may be good for you or what may bring you joy and happiness. *I* want this and *I* demand to have it! Of course, we all must love ourselves. But when we love we never seek our own good at the expense of others.

"Love is not provoked." It is not prone to exasperation, to bitterness, rather love causes one to be calm, serious and patient.

When there is real love, there is a barrier against sudden outbursts of wrath and unkindness. Love is not easily provoked or exasperated. Husbands and wives ought to try to be more patient and understanding with one another. Think about this for awhile. What if you know that that dear companion of yours would be gone out into eternity tomorrow, how would you talk and act then? If you knew that the hand you now hold in the privacy of your own living room would tomorrow be stilled and cold in death—what then? Would the things about him or her which have vexed you so greatly the past few days be as important as they now seem to be? Husbands, would you make as big a "to do" about the food being cold? Wives, would you make as big a point and say as many unkind things about his throwing his clothes in the floor, if you knew that tomorrow you would be talking with the funeral director about the arrangements for his funeral? We sometimes sing the song, "Precious Memories." This is one of the most heart-touching funeral songs I have ever heard.

Precious memories, how they flood our souls when our loved ones are gone! Sometimes they flood our souls with memories of wonderful times together. But sometimes husbands and wives must remember the unkind words they said to one another. They must remember countless ways they could have made the way easier and happier for the other but — because of a lack of love, because of selfishness — they failed to do it. Let us learn to give flowers to the living. Let us learn to love and to show it while they are alive. It must be a truly heart-breaking experience for parents to lose a little child in death and then have to remember many unkind words and deeds while that child was alive. It must be much the same way with husbands and wives. When one has gone, oh how the one who is left wishes that he could recall those unkind, harsh words spoken in outbursts of anger and irritability. But love guards against such things. Love causes us to look soberly at things and even when we are injured to govern our tempers and to subdue our feelings. Love causes us to look at the whole case and try to understand why the other did as he did. Love causes us to ascribe a good motive to others and to try to understand.

Then Paul said, "Love taketh not account of evil." Love causes us not to note the misdeeds of others and write them down in a "ledger." Love causes us to take a "wet sponge" and wipe away the record of misdeeds from our minds. How many of us here tonight have heard a husband or a wife say to the other, "I remember what you did away back when! Don't think I have forgotten it, because I haven't." Love causes us to get the best possible construction on actions of others.

Again, Paul said, "Love rejoiceth not in unrighteousness." Love causes us to be sad when others fail or fall. Those who do not love may say, "Aha! I knew you were

going to fail. I knew you couldn't make it!" Sometimes married folks give the impression that they are happy over the failures of their companion. Such action demonstrates a lack of love. No marriage can endure a constant diet of bickering and fighting, carping and criticizing. You may say, "Well, we have been fighting for twenty years and we haven't divorced yet!" But your marriage can fail without your getting a divorce. It can fail to be what God would have it to be. It can fail in that it brings unhappiness rather than happiness. It can fail in the sense that it does not help both companions to walk closer to God. We must remember that marriage is fundamentally and primarily a spiritual relationship; that is, its fundamental designs are spiritual. But you can overcome this failure if you want to — and are willing to listen to God, to His Word.

"Love rejoiceth in the truth." When you truly love, you are happy for the truth to be made known even when it is to your own hurt.

"Love beareth all things." Love guards our hearts against malice. It causes us to want to help others instead of publishing their faults all over the countryside. It makes me literally cringe to hear a husband or wife reciting out in public the faults of his or her partner. Love is much like the sides of a ship which guards the cargo from the sea water. Love guards our hearts from resentment. How many of you married people go around with resentment in your heart against your partner?

"Love believeth all things." Love causes us to be quick to believe the best about each other. It causes us to reject the worst about each other. Love causes us to trust one another and to be worthy of the trust. Many husbands and wives are always misinterpreting the actions of the other. This proves they do not love.

"Love endureth all things." This is something of an advance on "beareth all things." This means that love causes us to hang on and hold our ground even when there seems to be no longer any reason to hope. This is what causes some wives to endure what seems to be beyond human endurance.

At this point in our study, some may be asking, "This is all fine, and I can see what love could do for our marriage, but I do not love that way. How can I grow in love?" There are some steps which I believe will help anyone to grow in love. First, visualize in your mind the kind of person God would have you to be; that is, one who truly loves his life's companion. Then recognize that this problem involves the will, as well as the emotions. Then begin to practice what you know you should practice. Having visualized yourself as a person who truly loves your companion, then begin to live as if you already were that person. A loving person is one who does the things I have just mentioned. Such a person is one who has the qualities Paul described in I Corinthians 13. Visualize yourself as a person who is kind, gentle, affectionate, forgiving, tender, long-suffering. Visualize yourself as a person who is never harsh, unkind, inconsiderate, or critical. Spend time in prayer asking the Lord to help you to become this kind of person. This is what God wants you to be, and He wants to help you to become such a person. And He will do so if you will but follow His Word and ask Him to help you. Arise from the prayer with your heart filled with determination to act as if your heart were truly under the influence of love. "But," you may cry, "I would be a hypocrite to act in such fashion." Oh no you would not! A hypocrite has no intention of becoming any better. He is playing a part. But if you follow this suggestion, you will be striving with your whole heart to become what God

wants you to become. Keep before you this image of the person you wish to become and pray to God for help to become that person. I firmly believe that when you perform acts of love, these acts help you to become more loving. It works like a circle. The more acts of hate you perform, the more you will hate those to whom you do these acts. But the more acts of love you perform, the more you will love those to whom or for whom you do the acts of love. This works. Just spend one day smiling at every one you meet and see what it does for your heart. When you are driving your car, don't ever take advantage of the other fellow, but let him go first. See what this does for your attitude toward mankind in general. See if you don't get a glow all inside of you. "Turning the other cheek" is not merely an arbitrary rule which God demands we follow. It is written into the fibre of human relations. It works in the home. When you are unkind, harsh, and critical, what happens? The more you criticize, the less you think of the ones you are being unkind to — and the less they think of you. But, when you are kind and gentle in the home, what happens? The more words of love and tenderness you say, the more you love those to whom you speak. The deeds of love you do, the happier you are. Why can't mankind see this and apply it to their lives? Yes, we can grow in our love for others. But just try holding malice or a spirit of revenge and see what happens to your outlook on life. Just see how sour and grouchy you will become, See how unhappy you will be.

Yes, I maintain that to have one's heart filled with love is the greatest mark of maturity that one can have. When we see marks of immaturity creeping into our lives, let us remember that we can help one another to grow toward maturity. Husbands and wives, confess your faults — your own faults, not those of your partner — one to another and

pray for each other. Pray that together you might grow to be the kind of persons God would have you to be. Love one another not only for what you were at the time you married but for what you are now. And not only for that but also for the kind of person that each can become. Love one another for what you have meant to each other, for what each has helped the other to become. Love one another for the many times that each has overlooked some failure in the other. Love each other for the times that each has looked for the good and overlooked the bad. Love each other for what each has done to help the other to walk closer to God. Love each other for the happiness which each has brought to the other. Love each other for the moments of loud laughter and for the silent moments when no word needed to be spoken. Love each other for the children whom, together you have brought into the world. Love each other for the moments of great concern for the health — or even the life — of your little ones as you leaned together over their crib. Love and be happy. Fail to love — and destroy yourselves.

Another mark of maturity is that of *having a high goal for human life*. Instead of saying *a high goal*, I should say: *the high goal of human life*. That high goal is using this life on earth to prepare to be with God in eternity. The great purpose of this life is to prepare to meet God in Judgment and to spend eternity with Him on the other side of the Judgment. In the connection, I have already expressed to you in previous lessons in this series the thought that the fundamental purpose of marriage is to help one another to walk closer to God. Marriage is not a relationship whereby the two partners stand with their backs to one another, each using marriage only for his own selfish purposes. Neither is marriage to be pictured by two persons facing one another, so that they worship one

another. They are to worship God, not one another. Instead of these two erroneous views, marriage is better considered as two people standing side by side facing toward heaven, with resolve to help one another to be happy in this life, to help one another to walk closer to God. All of the various aspects of marriage should be pointed toward this goal. Mature people can help one another to this goal. Immature people will drive one another away from it.

Marriage may well be compared with a book. You know the cover of a book does not always accurately convey just what its contents are. Artists are hired to make the cover as attractive as possible, but the book itself may be very dull and uninteresting. Some of the chapters may be very interesting while other chapters are not. Some of them may be very exciting while some of them may be very dull. But a good book has a goal; it has an aim. Just so it is with marriage; a good marriage has a goal. The best marriages have the goal of helping one another go to heaven. To this end, husbands and wives should be obedient to God. They should obey God as the Bible directs. They should worship in their own home together. Certainly they should pray together and read the Bible together. Side by side they should have their eyes on Christ, the author and finisher of our faith, and they should help one another to deal with all of the complex problems and profound relationships of husbands and wives; they should help one another to walk the pathway that leads to everlasting life. This is maturity. This is Christian maturity.

V

MARRIAGE — YOURS CAN BE A SUCCESSFUL ONE

As we begin our study tonight, I would like to say something about the enthusiasm and great encouragement which has come to me during this series of meetings. I have been encouraged, more than I shall be able to describe to you, by the response which has been given to this series. The fine audiences we have had from night to night, the many young people who have been attending, and the fine interest I see manifested in their faces as these lessons are delivered all are inspiring to me. Many times only a few youngsters who are not doing as they should do gain a great deal of notoriety while the many thousands who are doing as they should gain no attention whatever. Too many times we have expected our youngsters to do what is right when we have not given them the information, the guidance and the training which they should have had. And I am thoroughly convinced that the church needs to take a stronger stand on these matters, and to be more militant and aggressive and to take more initiative in presenting the kind of lessons we have had this week. I have been greatly encouraged by the intense interest shown in these lessons, I might even say that the interest which has been manifested by young married couples — and even by those who are older — has been overwhelming. It is encouraging to me more than I shall ever be able to describe to you.

This series of lessons has been on my heart for a good long while. I made intensive preparation both for a series of studies on this subject for a weekly class which I taught during the past nine months. I also made intensive pre-

paration for this special series. I hope it has been worthwhile.

In the lesson for this evening I hope to tie together what has been said in the previous lessons, along with some new thoughts, and present to you what I conceive to be the basic ingredients for a successful marriage. For this reason I have chosen to call our sermon for tonight: "Marriage — Yours Can Be a Successful One!" In our audience tonight, there are many young people who, no doubt, are looking forward with eager anticipation to the time when they themselves will be married. This is the way they should look at the matter. I am very glad and grateful that they are here. I hope that I can impress them with some principles which they will use to make their marriages successful ones. By "successful" marriages I do not refer to those which merely avoid divorce. A successful marriage, as I view Bible teaching on the matter, is one which reaches the physical, mental or intellectual, emotional, and spiritual levels which God would have marriages to reach. And the fundamental thesis of my lesson this evening is: *yours* can be a successful marriage.

There is much value to be gained from marriages being successful. The lives of married partners will be intensely enriched. All such will gain happiness they would never otherwise gain. They will reach emotional, mental, and spiritual — as well as physical — levels which they very likely would not reach otherwise. Then, when the lives of the mother and father in the home are enriched, the lives of the children in that home are also enriched. They are then afforded the marvelous — indescribable — privilege of growing up in a home where love reigns supreme. Who can truly estimate the real value of such a heritage? The parent-child relationship will be greatly improved.

Because of this, no doubt many souls will be saved who would not be saved otherwise.

Then when the various relationships within the home are improved, the relationship between home and the church will be improved. When this relationship is improved, then the church itself will be improved. And, in turn, whatever helps the church also helps the homes in which there are members of the church. You can see that we are dealing with matters which are truly fundamental. These things have to do with our day by day living. They have to do with things that make contribution to our happiness.

So far in this series, we have studied four lessons. The first lesson was a study of the importance of this series of studies. Then we studied some of the reasons why so many marriages fail. Then we studied about the significance of the vow which people take when they are married. Next, we studied a lesson on maturity. In that lesson it was noted that marriage is not for those who are yet immature. And now, I wish to tie all of this preceding material together, along with some new thoughts, to set forth the ingredients of a successful marriage. In preparing this material, the sources upon which I have relied the most are few as to general classification. First, and foremost, I have depended upon the Bible, the Word of God. I believe with all of my heart that the Bible provides the answer not only to the question of what to do to be saved from sin, but I also believe that it provides man with the answer to his problems of daily living. It provides man with the answer to the question of how to build a successful marriage. Then, I've drawn source material from books written by men who have served many years as marriage counselors. I have also drawn from the writings of medical doctors who have written manuals on the physical side of man. Some

of these writers were women. I have read also numbers of articles from women writers in some of the leading magazines. I feel that I have studied the matter from the woman's viewpoint as well as the man's. I have, quite naturally, drawn some conclusions from my own marriage and from my own years of living. No one could completely disassociate himself from his own experiences. Nor do I wish for a moment to leave the impression that I should like to do so. I have also drawn from my own experience in counseling with those who have come to me for help in holding their marriage together and in building their marriage to be what it should be. Although I am not a marriage counselor — I am, of course, a minister of the Gospel — yet many people do go to ministers for help in these matters. I know that I — and I am sure this is true of other ministers — am certainly happy for them to come. I am always happy to give what help I can, although I am sure there are others who are better qualified to give such help than I. At any rate, I hope the material is of value to some.

The lesson this evening will be divided into three main parts: (1) what both husband and wife can do to help make their marriage successful; (2) what the husband can do in helping to make the marriage a successful one; and (3) what the wife can do in making the marriage a successful one.

The importance of building a successful marriage cannot be overestimated. I am going to say tonight the things which I feel need to be said. I shall not be seeking, at least not so far as I know my own heart, to please any person. But I shall strive to say the very things which I sincerely feel need to be said. I am going to say the things which I feel the Lord would have me to say.

Let us turn our attention first of all to *the things which both husband and wife can do to help make the marriage a successful one*. By that I mean that there are some matters which are vital to the building of a successful marriage which apply to both men and women.

In that connection, let us note first of all some *general matters*. Both bride and groom, as they prepare for marriage, and as they enter it, should recognize that *Christian character is the true basis for successful marriage*. You cannot build a strong house of brick out of rotten wood; you cannot build a successful marriage out of people who have poor character. Every day thousands plunge into marriage with little or no thought of the duties, the responsibilities, the obligations and qualifications of successful marriage. Likely many are seeking nothing more than the fulfillment of their physical desires. Such are motivated by lust and by selfishness.

Young people should be trained by Christians: by their parents, by Christian teachers, by preachers of the Gospel, by Bible Class teachers and others in the Christian principles of marriage. Each person coming to take the vows of marriage should recognize that one should bring a pure mind and a pure body to marriage. As Paul has taught in I Corinthians 3:17. There is no double standard of morality.

There is not one for man and another for women. Preserve your good name by associating only with those of good character and who have high spiritual levels. Paul taught in I Cor. 15, "Be not deceived, evil companions helps corrupt good morals." Do not be misled, young people. Do not believe that you can associate with a crowd of people whose morals and standards of conduct are low and not be affected by those low standards.

In the next place, to be the best marriage partner, *one should become a Christian*, a child of God. I am not referring now to simply becoming religious. I am talking about obeying the "will of God" which Jesus speaks about on the Sermon on the Mount. (Matthew 7:21). It is those who do *the* will of God who enter the Kingdom of God. Those who are born of water and the spirit are added by the Lord himself to the church to the one body which he purchased with his own blood. (John 3:3-5; Acts 2:41, 47; 20:28).

One should then become an active, faithful child of God. In making the notes for this study, I first jotted down the point that divorce is *almost* unknown in marriages in which both partners are faithful Christians. After considering this matter, I went back and scratched out the word "almost" and said it this way. "Divorce is unknown where both partners are faithful Christians." It is inconceivable that a marriage in which both partners are faithful Christians that the marriage should fail and end in divorce. Christian character is essential to successful marriage.

In the second place, having first considered that Christian character is essential to successful marriage, *let us recognize the place of true love in successful marriage*. We talked about this in some detail last evening, but it will not hurt any of us to restate some of these points. It will not hurt us to review these matters. To build a successful marriage, both bride and groom must recognize the vital place which Christian love holds in the matter. In I Corinthians, Paul explained how people act when their hearts are filled with love.

When one truly loves his companion, *he will be long-suffering with his partner's weaknesses*. He or she is not

perfect and neither are you — help him or her to become more like Christ, and in doing so you will help yourself to become more like Christ.

Love causes us to be kind.

Be free from pride and arrogance. Don't always insist on your own way.

Do not vaunt yourself. Do not treat your companion with contempt.

Do not be betrayed into forgetfulness of what is due others. Avoid harsh language, avoid ridicule and innuendo. The song that we sang a moment ago had a wonderful exhortation: "Angry words, Oh let them never from the tongue unbridled slip . . ." How easy it is when our hearts are not prepared, when we have not guarded ourselves against such, to be guilty of sudden outbursts of anger. When an unkind word is spoken we strike back with a harsh word that hurts the heart of our beloved. When this occurs do not be too little to say, "I am sorry." Be big enough to apologize and having apologized, ask for forgiveness. And, having asked forgiveness, ask your beloved to pray with you. We are never so tall as when we bow to admit our weaknesses. This is a step on the road to building a successful marriage.

Do not seek your own happiness at the expense of your companion. If you seek your happiness in this fashion, you will not only destroy the happiness of your beloved, but you will also destroy your own. In fact, either marriage partner becomes unhappy by seeking his own happiness at the expense of his companion. And either marriage partner becomes happy by seeking to make the other happy.

Do not be easily provoked. Do not be prone to exasperation or bitterness. The Psalmist said that he had hidden

God's word in his heart that he might not sin against Him. In the same way, we must "hide" love in our hearts so that we might not be easily exasperated and led into caustic speech. Rather, love causes us to be quiet, calm, grateful for our blessings, and considerate always of the feelings of others. Let every one of us, every husband and wife, every young man and young woman who intends to be husband and wife, mark it down that when we have degenerated into saying something unkind then we are no longer influenced or motivated by love. At least not in that incident. Love causes us not to do this. Love causes us not to be betrayed into saying that which is unkind.

Do not take account of evil. Do not enter misdeeds of your companion into a "ledger" so that you may easily remember them and bring them up at some future time. Forget unkind deeds and put the best possible construction on the actions of your beloved.

Be saddened when your companion fails. Do not be ready with a statement such as this: "I knew this was going to happen, this is the way you always do!" By such tactics you can destroy yourself as well as your companion.

Bear all things. Guard your heart against resentment. As a ship keeps the sea water out of the cargo, envision your love as guarding your heart from resentment.

Endure all things. Continue to hold on patiently even when all grounds for hoping seem to be lost.

Thus far tonight, I have covered two points: (1) Christian character is the true basis for a Christian marriage, and (2) love plays a vital role in building a successful marriage.

In the third place, I suggest that *you should expect your love to grow*. It is true that the honeymoon is soon over,

and, with the passing of the years, the heat of passion may subside somewhat, but your love will grow deeper and deeper and become more profound and more meaningful as the years go by. This will come to pass provided both of you are living as God would have you to live, provided you are building true christian character, and provided your heart is growing in love. These things must be true of both of you. A marriage cannot be truly successful when it is true of only one partner. This is one reason why marriage involves such a tremendous commitment. When we marry, we stand before God and man, and we commit the rest of our lives into the hands of someone that we really do not know very well. Someone with whom we have never lived, and yet we commit ourselves to live with them for the rest of our lives. This is why marriage demands such serious consideration. This is why it involves making the right preparation ourselves and then choosing someone else who has made that same kind of preparation.

Thinking about getting married is much like venturing on some new, strange undertaking. It is much like thinking about learning to fly. A fellow may "fall in love" with an airplane and be thrilled by the thought that he will soon commit his very life into the hands of that airplane. The thought of soaring off into the "wild, blue yonder" thrills him indescribably. He has the feeling of anticipation for the union much as a young man anticipates the union with his bride. The first few flights are filled with ecstatic thrills — much like the honeymoon of newly-weds. But the "honeymoon" period in flying passes. There come the day when flyers realize that there are at least a few moments of dullness — and even unpleasantness — connected with flying. Yet the experience has become more meaningful and profound. So it is with marriage: the "honey-

moon" passes but when the two are mature Christians, the honeymoon passes into something more profound and meaningful. This does not mean that their passion for one another will lessen in every sense. Rather, it in a sense should grow. But it will take on added meanings. The relationship will become more profound.

In the fourth place, I suggest that you must recognize that *marriage is primarily a spiritual relationship*. This involves all of its aspects. It involves the physical, the mental, emotional, and the spiritual relationships. All of these are spiritually related. We know this is true because in Ephesians 5, as Paul wrote of the relationship of husband and wife and compared it with the relationship of Christ and the church, he said that Christ gave Himself up for the Church so that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing. Christ took a bride to lead her to higher spiritual levels. Since Christ took His Bride that He might lead her to a higher spiritual level, a man is to take a wife to help her to higher spiritual levels. This is one reason why I maintain that the Bible plainly teaches that every aspect of marriage is spiritually related and that marriage is fundamentally a spiritual relationship.

Also in I Peter 3:7, Peter taught that the husband should live with his wife according to knowledge, giving honor unto her as unto the weaker vessel. This was to be done to the end that their prayers be not hindered. It is possible, but it is extremely difficult for a man to live with a woman (or a woman live with a man) whose life is antagonistic to Christianity and grow spiritually. Peter recognizes this truth in the statement just quoted.

In the fifth place, I suggest that you *should expect great things of your marriage*. Have a high expectation. Hope

is a powerful thing and the losing of hope is destructive and degrading. Expect great things of your marriage and expect your marriage to keep on growing and growing toward higher levels and greater accomplishments. Study Hebrews 6:19 for a comparison.

In the sixth place recognize that *selfishness is at the bottom of almost every* marriage problem. I challenge you to think about that carefully and prayerfully before you deny it. Let me make this statement again; selfishness is at the root of almost every marriage problem. Sometimes some other things are involved. Ignorance is often involved, but even in such cases the fundamental problem may be selfishness.

Now let us look at some more *specific matters* as to what is vital to building a successful marriage. I mentioned one of these in passing, but I want to mention it again. In the seventh place, during courtship *prepare* yourself for marriage and choose as your companion one who has also prepared. By that I mean one who has made *Christian* preparation. By so doing you may very well save yourself a lifetime of sorrow and an eternity of torment. If you once and for all, while you are young, make the decision that you will be involved in courtship only with those whom you feel could be properly involved with you in what is fundamentally a spiritual relationship. You may save yourself much heartache. Young people, mark this down, in courtship you are seeking happiness, and you can assure yourself of the greatest happiness by preparing yourself as God would have you to prepare and by choosing one who has made the same kind of preparation.

Girls, do you want as the father of *your* children a man who is not a Christian? Do you want as your husband a man with whom you cannot even pray? Do you want as

your husband a man with whom you cannot truly share the most profound and meaningful relationship in your life? Do you want as the father of your children a man who will not teach them to be obedient children of God? Think on these things before you take the big step. Think on these things before you even get yourself involved in courtship with a person who is not a Christian. Of course, the same questions, in principle should be asked by boys also.

In the eighth place, I suggest that you *wait until you are mature*. Wait until you are mature in years, until you are an adult. Wait until you are mature physically. More important, wait until you are mature mentally and emotionally. We studied that point last evening; our entire study was about that. Recently I read the story a preacher told of a mother who came to him and asked if she could speak to him for a moment. He could tell there was something on her mind. She was rather secretive in her actions. She began to tell him about her daughter wanting to be married. However, she explained that the young couple had had an argument and had torn the marriage license into pieces and thrown it into the fire. But the mother had been able to save part of it. The couple had then decided to go ahead with the marriage. But they were not ready for marriage. People who have no more emotional stability than this, and who act in such childish fashion, are not ready to take upon themselves the solemn obligations and responsibilities which follow from standing before God and saying, "I take this woman whose right hand I now hold to be my lawful wedded wife, to live together after God's ordinance, to have and to hold, to love, to honor, to cherish, to provide for in sickness and in health, in prosperity and adversity, and to keep myself to her only so long as we both shall live." What a commitment this is!

Shall "babies" enter into such a covenant? A person who, at the very threshold of marriage, in a fit of childish anger, would tear up a marriage license and throw it into the fire is not ready for such a covenant.

Think about such babies going ahead with the ceremony! I say that these young people needed counseling. They needed to wait until they had grown up. Marriage is not for children. Young couples who are constantly breaking up and reconciling, breaking up and reconciling, are not ready for marriage. It would be a miracle if such people were able to build a marriage that would be pleasing to God. It would only be through the grace of God they would be able to endure the initial stormy season which would be sure to be there while they are both still babies, until they grew up a little bit and learned how to handle conflicts and change — until they learned how to make the adjustments which every married person must make. Wait until you are mature *spiritually*. Wait until you understand the true meaning and philosophy of life. Wait until you understand something of the fact that to "fear God and keep His commandments is the whole duty of man." Wait until you understand that the "glitter" of Hollywood and Broadway, that the making of money, the gaining of power, and all such things are only "vanity" and a "striving after the wind." Wait until you understand at least a little about the thought that making a living — earning a livelihood — is secondary to making a life, a life of serving God. Wait until you are mature. You are "playing with fire" otherwise. A marriage before you are mature may very well land you in the divorce court before you are even grown. Then your life may well be ruined. You may find yourself in the position of being unable to remarry; that is, you may find yourself in the position of being unable to remarry with God's approval.

(Matthew 19:9; 5:32, 33). No, marriage is not for "babies"; it is not for children. It is not for the immature. It is for adults, those who have grown up emotionally and spiritually. It is for those who love God, and one another. In the truly ideal sense, it is for those who are united in Christ, those who can truly help one another and their children to so live as to go to heaven when this life is over. Note that I did not suggest merely that the couple have the same religion. I am saying that both should in Christ; they should both be Christians, members of the body of Christ. (Acts 2:1-47; I Corinthians 12:13; Acts 8:26-40; Romans 6:3-5).

In the tenth place, I suggest that *the couple should learn or should recognize that God, not man, instituted marriage*. The couple should agree, therefore, to be guided by the laws of God in all matters pertaining to marriage. When man's law contradicts the law of God, then they must agree to be guided by the law of God. (Acts 5:29). I wonder how many people have taken the vows of marriage, have stood before God and man and committed themselves to a life of devotion to one another, without understanding very much about what they were saying? How many people have done this without realizing that God hates those who break their marriage covenant and put away their companions? The prophet Malachi in the Old Testament makes it clear how strongly God feels about those who deal treacherously with the wives of their youth and lightly toss them aside for someone who, for the moment, seems to be more physically attractive?

In the next place, I suggest this: *married couples must learn how to handle properly their financial affairs*. Mainly, this means that they must learn how to live within their income. They should be frank with one another about this. They should talk over the problems connected with

it openly and frankly. It would be good to do this even before the wedding takes place. Young couples should realize that they do not have to buy everything they see or even everything they want. Above all, put the Lord first in your financial affairs. See that you decide first of all what portion of your income is going into the Lord's work. Actually we are only stewards. All of what we have already belongs to the Lord, and we must be faithful as stewards.

Here is another suggestion: *do not allow yourselves to be led into situations in which you might be easily tempted to do evil.* Paul said, "Flee fornication." By this admonition, he taught that we should run away from situations in which we might be overly tempted to do evil. When couples avoid this, their marriage will not be broken up by one of them succumbing to a sudden temptation. Avoid such situations and you will never be guilty of violating the vow which you took when you married to be "faithful unto death."

Here is another important point: *when you marry, leave your father and mother and cleave unto your wife or husband.* This is not to say that you are to leave their love for you or your love for them. It is to say that you must recognize that you have established a new home with new leadership. You may, and very likely should, seek out and get the advice of your parents after you are married. They are wise because of the years of experience, and they love you and want only good to come your way. But at the same time, I caution you to remember that you have now established your own home and should be independent. The new husband must take the responsibilities as the head of a new family. The new wife must take on the responsibilities of being the "queen" of a new home. She must not "run home to Mama" everytime some-

thing happens which doesn't please her! Neither one should criticize the in-laws but, on the other hand, neither one should take orders from in-laws. Remember the divine instruction: "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife . . ." (Matthew 19:5).

As another vital point, I suggest: *married couples should avoid the little quarrels*. Avoid the little quarrels, the ones about things that do not amount to much, and you will have very few that ever amount to anything. Usually the big quarrels in a marriage are simply the accumulation of resentment which came about as the result of a great many little quarrels, ones that seem to go on about all of the time and finally "boil over" into a really big one. Then feelings are hurt; hearts are wounded. And it is sometimes hard to ever recover from them. Husbands and wives sometimes wonder how they ever got into the situation of arguing about a thing so vehemently. Sometimes they ask, "How did we get into this?" They wonder, "How did we get into the situation of making so much out of this?" The answer, I think, is found in the accumulation of a great many quarrels about little things. So, let me suggest to you, let me urge you, to avoid the quarrels about little things. Then you will not be very likely to have quarrels about big things.

As a fifteenth suggestion, I offer this: *fight for — not against — each other!* After all, you *two* have become *one*. There is a sense in which it is you two (who have become one) against the world. There are many battles to be fought in this life. Try to be as sure as you can be that the battles you fight are *for* each other and *with* each other against the world. Don't let your battles be *against* each other.

Then, in the sixteenth place, I suggest that when and if you do battle each other, *don't do it where others can observe or hear*. Remember, there are profound things about your relationship. Don't make it cheap — or appear to be cheap — by a battle in front of other people. A cutting word can wound enough if no one else hears it, but when others hear, sometimes it wounds enough to seriously — and sometimes permanently — damage your marriage. Don't criticize one another in front of other people; don't do it in front of your own children. Of course, it is best not to do this at all. Discuss things as Christians should, and do not allow your discussion of problems to degenerate into a squabble.

As a seventeenth suggestion, I offer this: *be in a good humor at all times*. Make up your mind that you are going to be in a good humor, that you are going to have a good disposition. Make up your mind that you can be happy. Make up your mind that you can be happy right now! Do not let yourself fall into the habit of being sour and morose. Don't let yourself fall into the habit — and it is a *habit* with many — of being grouchy. Study such passages as Matthew 5:1-3 and Philippians 4:4-8. Imbibe the spirit of these passages and incorporate them into your life. There is no reason why a child of God should not be happy. Jesus wants us to be, and He will help us to be. When you are happy yourself, you can help your companion to be happy. When you are unhappy, it is almost impossible for your companion to be happy. I realize that there are many problems of life which tend to destroy our peace of mind and happiness, but remember that from a prison Paul wrote, "Rejoice, and again I say unto thee rejoice." He also said, "In nothing be anxious . . ." Let us learn to trust in the Lord and lean not on our own understanding. He has promised to direct us in the pathways of

life. (Proverbs 3:3-5). He has promised to be our Shepherd, and, as a result of this, we shall stand in need of nothing. (Psalms 23). The Lord is a high place to which we can flee for refuge during a flood of sorrows and tribulations. Why then should we not be happy, even in the face of great trouble. Help your companion to be happy by being happy yourself.

In the eighteenth place, I suggest that *husband and wife should do some things together*. They should do some things with their children. This will help to build family unity. But they also owe it to themselves to do some things together just by themselves. They should take at least short trips together, have projects together. Just as you started out together, just so some day all of your children will be married and have their own homes, and you will once again be together — just the two of you together. You need to build your lives together now. Three days together at a place away from home and away from everyone who knows you can do wonders for a marriage. Make a second “honeymoon” out of it. It might even be greater than your first honeymoon. In some ways, it is almost certain to be better. Married people ought to have at least one “honeymoon” a year.

Another suggestion I would make for a happy marriage is this: *learn to compromise on things that do not really matter*; learn to “give and take.” Do not be afraid to admit that your companion has an idea which is better than yours. Do not be afraid or ashamed to admit that your idea or plan was not very good. And don’t be hesitant about apologizing. At times, the three words, “I am sorry,” can be the most important words you could utter. False pride — let me emphasize that: *false pride* — has likely caused many a husband and many a wife to fail to say, “I am sorry,” when the saying of it would have saved

their marriage. Think of how much is at stake: your happiness on earth, and perhaps your eternal destiny. Learn to say, "I am sorry." And then live in harmony with that apology. Learn to forgive and ask forgiveness. Having a quarrel can rend your heart, but making up can be a wonderful experience. Always be trying to grow up. Always be trying to be more grown up today than you were yesterday. Learn to meet conflict and the need for adjustment with patience and kindness.

We come now to the second part of our study: *what the husband can do to help build a happy marriage*. I have already talked about things which both husband and wife can do; that is, the things already mentioned are things which apply to both husband and wife. But now I wish to talk about things which apply to the husband.

In the first place, I suggest that a *husband can continue his courtship after marriage*. Some women complain: "As soon as you are married, they take you for granted." Likely, this complaint is not without some grounds. Husbands ought to continue the courtship. I do not mean in the sense that they feel they have to win their wives over and over. Husbands and wives must feel certain of one another. I do mean, however, that the husband should recognize and meet the need of constantly fanning into brightness a flame which is already burning. Husbands should think back to the time when they were courting the girl who became their wife. Let them remember how thoughtful and courteous they were then. Let them remember how they used to open doors for them and how they waited until their wives had gone through the door before going through themselves. But many husbands never open a door for their wives. There is no reason why such courtesies and such thoughtfulness should not be continued after marriage. Husbands should remember birth-

days, anniversaries, and so on. In addition, they should surprise their wives with a gift of flowers, candy and such like at times when there is no special occasion. Any wife will appreciate this. Also, it doesn't hurt for a husband to tell his wife, "I love you." In fact, it doesn't hurt to do this often.

In the second place, I suggest that a *husband can show his appreciation for the many things his wife does*. A wife must work long and hard to do a good job in caring for the home. Many husbands just take this all for granted. They think about how hard their own job is, but they do not think about the work which their wives do. A good cure for this would be to let the husband stay home for two weeks and take care of the house while he also cares for three or four little children. Then he will be more appreciative of what his wife does all the year around. Husbands, tell your wife that she did a good job in her cooking. Tell her that she did a good job in cleaning up the house. Tell her that she did a good job of fixing her hair. Tell her she did a good job in picking out her new dress. Compliment her when you can, and, if you will look, you will find many occasions in which you can sincerely do so.

In the third place, I suggest that in helping to build a successful marriage, *husbands can stop complaining so much*. With some husbands, nothing is ever right. When wives go to marriage counselors and are interviewed, many of them cite this point. Even when a wife has almost exhausted herself to try to make something nice for her husband, instead of complimenting her, he complains about something. Husbands, stop grumbling and grow up. Be thankful. Count your many blessings. See what God has done, and see what your wife has done. ". . . and be ye thankful."

As a fourth point, I suggest that, in helping to build a

successful marriage, *husbands can be real leaders*. They can provide direction and leadership to the family. They can provide courage and strength and independence for the home. The wife is the weaker vessel in many ways — even if many of them do outlive their husbands. They need the strength which comes from a truly strong husband. By “strong” I do not mean physical strength so much as I mean mental and emotional strength. God designed man to be the leader in the home. (Ephesians 5:22-33). When the husband fails to provide this leadership, then the entire family suffers because of this failure.

A fifth point which I feel is worthy of your consideration as a factor in building a successful marriage is this: *husbands should take an interest in the home*. In one sense, the home is the wife’s domain; she is the “queen” of the home. But in another sense, the home is a mutual obligation. The task of rearing the children must not be left entirely to the wives. This is a mutual obligation. (Ephesians 6:4). When a husband has “brought home the bacon,” he has not finished with all God gave him to do.

Now here is a sixth point: *husbands must gain the right conception of marriage*. Not long ago, in the *Twentieth Century Christian* — it was an old issue of that fine little magazine — I read what I felt was a very fine article by the Head of the Bible Department in one of our Christian Colleges. This brother has had a great deal of experience in marriage counseling and has held a very high position in a state association for mental health. I believe that some of the things he said in that article need to be said from pulpits all over this land. I do not have the article at hand so I am not going to quote. Neither is he to be held responsible for what I am about to say. I only wanted to acknowledge my debt to him for that fine article. Much

of what I am about to say for the next few minutes will be based on the general contents of that article. I refer you to that article because I believe that what it stated is in harmony with the Word of God and also with what I have encountered in my own work of trying to help married couples who were having trouble. Some husbands simply do not have the right conception of marriage. When they think of their wives, they apparently think, not of a person with individual worth and dignity in the sight of God, but of the bodies of their wives. They think of their wives as bodies, not as persons. They seem to think of their wife as a sexual partner. Then, as a second aspect, they think of them as a household servant. They want the use of the bodies of their wives without really understanding the spiritual significance of their marriages. But when a husband looks upon his wife in this fashion, he is motivated by lust and selfishness. He thereby reduces women to a mere thing — a mere tool — to be used by man. He thus reduces the wondrous matter of sex to the level of the use made of it by *animals*. Animals engage in sex on the purely physical level. No love is involved. No spiritual aspect is involved. But this should not be true of human beings. In ideal marriage, each partner recognizes the other to be a person — not a mere thing to be used — with worth and dignity in the sight of God. Husbands should study very carefully the spiritual aspects of the sexual union in marriage. Too many men, evidence seems to indicate, separate sex from love. Instead of being a mutual expression of love, instead of being the “added language” which God gave to married people, to some men sex is a gratification of selfish lust and nothing more. No marriage can be truly happy when the husband has such an attitude. Husbands should recognize that the needs of his wife are as important as are his own needs. She is not merely a tool to be used for his own selfish purposes. Hus-

bands should love their wives in a sacrificial manner. They are taught to love their wives as Christ loved the church. (Ephesians 5). Christ gave Himself up for the church. Husbands should give themselves up for their wives.

Husbands would do well to study the physical anatomy of woman. In this day of easy availability of good material in this field there is no excuse for a husband to be ignorant of these matters. But some husbands who have been married a long time are still relatively ignorant of the basic anatomy of woman. With Christian physicians and written material available, there is no excuse for such ignorance of a matter which is so vital to the full happiness of both husband and wife. When a husband is ignorant of these matters, he can destroy the happiness which his marriage would have otherwise. Someone expressed the matter well when he said that a wife is much like a violin. In the hands of one who is a master musician, a violin is an instrument of beautiful music, but in the hands of anyone else it is nothing more than a "squawk box." Just so, with a husband who understands and has the right conception of marriage — its emotional and spiritual aspects — and who understands the things he should as to physical anatomy, a wife is an instrument of "beautiful music." But with a husband who conceives of marriage as merely a legal arrangement which affords him to use his wife as a tool for the satisfaction of his own selfish lust, then the "music" from such a marriage is anything but beautiful. A few years ago, when I lived in another city, I went to see a doctor one day about some minor ailment. This doctor was a member of the Lord's church and apparently had a great deal of interest in the church. After he had tended to my problem, he told me that he wished to talk to me for a few minutes about a problem which was on his mind. He was greatly concerned about the unhappiness which he saw

as a result of sexual maladjustment in so many marriages. Many of these marriages, he said, were among those who are members of the church. He told me that a great percentage of the people who came to him for treatment were women whose basic trouble was that they were unhappy from a sexual standpoint. He said that many women are torn apart, emotionally speaking, because their husbands looked upon them as mere tools. Of course, he pointed out, this was not all of the problem; it was not all of the reason for unhappiness in this matter. But it was a major factor. When you find ignorance and selfishness in the same husband, the result will be unhappiness and sorrow for the wife. And for the husband too! Evidence from other sources also indicates that this is a source of much unhappiness. But God doesn't intend it to be that way!

Along the same line, as a seventh point, I suggest that *husbands should learn about the emotional and psychological differences between men and women*. By nature, a woman is more appreciative of the aesthetic than man. She appreciates the fine things and the beautiful things of life. When men are placed in a military camp away from women, it is a different atmosphere from what it is when there are women. The response of woman in the intimate affairs of married life is different in time, in tone, and in tension from that of men. With women, little things mean a great deal. The husband who estimates the feelings of his wife only from his own makes a tragic mistake. A wife is not aroused by thought and sight as is man. She requires more of courtship and pursuit. It would be well for every husband to discuss this matter in detail with a Christian physician if possible. If not, there are some excellent marriage manuals which explain these matters in much more detail than I shall be able to do here in this mixed assembly. Fathers, ought to see to it that

their sons are taught these things in a Christian way before they are married.

As a ninth suggestion, I offer this point: *the husband should make it clear to his wife that she is essential to his happiness.* Every person has the need to be needed. If a wife feels that her husband does not need her, a basic need in her life is missing. God saw that it was not good for man to be alone, so, recognizing man's need, God gave him woman to be his wife. Husbands need their wives. They are not truly complete without their wives. The wife is the "counterpart" to the husband; she is the completing part, the part which makes him whole. The husband needs the wife and should let her know that he does.

Husbands should give their wives affection and security. Women need to feel secure and they need to know that they are loved. Husbands, show your love in many little ways day by day. You will be happier and so will your wife.

In the tenth place, I suggest that *husbands should not burden their wives with all of their business pressures.* I do not mean that they should be sheltered entirely from the problems of the business world, but there certainly should be a limit to what she is called upon to share in this field. I realize that the average man must deal with people who are not always honest. I realize that husbands must deal with some who are dishonest and who will defraud their fellowman. I realize that husbands must work long and hard hours to make a living for their families. I realize that the burden of being responsible for the provision for the family is a great burden. But I still say that the husband should not call upon the wife to share all of these burdens. But the main point I am making right now is this: when husbands are tired and irritable from all of the problems of making a living, they should not allow those bur-

dens to cause them to speak and act in a harsh manner with their wives.

And now we come to the third part of our study tonight: *some things the wife can do to help build a successful marriage.*

As my first suggestion, I offer this: *the wife should let her husband continue the courtship.* Perhaps I should have said that she should *encourage* him to continue the courtship. In some marriages, the husband sincerely tries to continue the courtship — you will remember that this was a suggestion I made as to what the husband could do — but the wife will not accept it. She may “cut him short” when he tries to show his affection. She may be unappreciative when he remembers various anniversaries and so on. She may not appreciate it when he gives her flowers, candy and so on. She may not allow her husband to open doors for her. Then, she may allow her physical appearance to degenerate unnecessarily. Every wife should try to make herself as physically attractive as she possibly can. No one — least of all a husband — likes to see a wife get up in the morning, put on an old, decrepit housecoat or robe, and drag around in that all day long with her hair not even combed. Some wives feel that they must look pretty for everybody else, but they do not seem to care how they look to their husbands. Some wives apparently expect their husbands to continue the courtship after marriage, but they do not give them much grounds for doing so. A slovenly appearance upon the part of the wife is rather destructive of whatever romantic inclinations the husband might have otherwise.

In the second place, I suggest that *wives should try to make the house as attractive as possible.* No right-thinking husband wants to come home to a house which is not well-kept. Some houses look like the aftermath of a tornado.

No marriage can be what it ought to be in such a situation. This also helps to keep courtship alive: keeping a neat house!

Then, I suggest that a wife can help to make marriage a success by *telling her husband of her love*. You may say, "Well, he already knows that I love him. Why should I tell him again and again?" Why indeed! Why should we worship God day after day and week after week? Why not tell the Lord that we love Him on the day we are baptized and then just never say anymore about it? We could say, "If I ever change my mind, I'll let you know." Just as there is a need for repetition in spiritual matters, just so there is the need in marital matters. Wives, not only accept the words of affection which your husband offers to you but give him some in return. It won't hurt you — or him — to say something along this line every day. This also helps to keep courtship alive and burning.

In the next place, I suggest to *wives that they identify themselves with the lives of their husbands*. The career of a husband is actually the career of his wife. She doesn't need another one. She doesn't need one other than the one of making a home for him and their children. This is the career for which God designed women. A wife may have some work which she does outside of the home, but she must still identify herself with the life and work of her husband. A wife can take great satisfaction in the fact that she makes a great contribution to her husband being able to accomplish what he does. Let him know that you identify yourself with his life and career. It will be a great stimulus to him to know that you sincerely feel that way. A wife should learn to listen to her husband and seek to comfort him in meeting the problems of the world which he has to meet. Although I urged the husbands not to overly burden their wives with the problems of their business

world, I urge the wives to listen carefully and earnestly to their husbands whenever they do seek to share some of that burden with them. Paul taught that each is to bear his own burden and yet he taught that we are to bear one another's burden. (Galatians 6:1ff).

In the fifth place, let me offer this suggestion: *a wife must make certain that her husband can be sure of her*, that he need never give a thought to her fidelity to the marriage vow. A wife who thinks that she can keep alive the interest of her husband by "flirting" with other men is making a tragic error. No successful marriage can be built on suspicion and jealousy. Marriage as God would have it is built on Christian character, on integrity, purity, honesty, and faithfulness. Be sure that your husband is sure of you, and then be the kind of person who is truly worthy of such trust. It is a terrible sin to be unfaithful to one's marriage vow. It is a sin which involves a great many persons in heart-ache beyond description. Remember, you are bound to your husband for so long a time as you both shall live.

As a sixth suggestion, I offer this: *wives must have the true conception of marriage*. I have already spent quite some time in this lesson tonight showing how much misery comes as the result of the *husband* having the wrong conception of marriage. Well, the wife can also have the wrong conception of marriage. During courtship, the wife properly holds herself and her person in reserve. Some women carry this reserve into marriage and regard physical intimacy as something sordid and as something to be avoided as much as possible. They do not have the right conception of marriage. They do not understand that sex is the "added language" which God gave to husband and wife as an additional means of expressing their love to one another. But wives, the Lord gave the "added language" of physical intimacy to husband and wife, and

He expects you to speak that "language" as one of His gifts and not to look upon it as something of which to be ashamed. Psychiatrists, marriage counselors, and psychologists tell us that some mothers, in their eagerness to provide some means of guarding their daughters against premarital intimacy, build into those daughters the idea that sex is something sordid and ugly. Outside of marriage it is ugly. But let no mother do her daughter — and her future husband — the terrible wrong of giving her a wrong conception of the place of sex in God's scheme of things for marriage. In I Corinthians 7, the Apostle Paul taught that for either marriage partner to withhold himself from the other is to be guilty of *fraud*! A woman physician recently wrote a book in which she warned wives not to be "too tired to love." In this article she — the woman doctor — pointed out that to escape their responsibilities on the intimate side of married life some wives pretend to be too tired to bother with it. Thus they become heedless of the needs of their companions. This woman doctor strongly warned against women making this mistake. Paul condemned it. He commanded husbands and wives not to withhold themselves from one another. He warned them not to stay apart lest they be tempted into fornication. (I Corinthians 7). So, wives, may I urge you to gain the right conception of marriage — just as you would like for your husband to have the right conception.

As a point much akin to what I have just talked about, I offer, as a seventh point, the following: *wives should recognize the differences between themselves and their husbands*. So far as the intimate side of married life is concerned, between husbands and wives there is a difference in time, in tone, and in tension. I pointed this out in connection with the things which husbands need to do. Now let me emphasize it so far as wives are concerned. Just as husbands sometimes make the mistake of judging

the feelings of their wives by their own feelings, just so some wives make the mistake of judging the feelings of their husband by their own feelings. Some wives make up their minds that if their husbands loved them, they would act in such fashion as to show that they cared nothing for the physical relationship. But this is a tragic error. Some wives judge the strong desire of their husbands to be the result of lack of spirituality, but I believe that I showed the error of that view in the second lesson in this series. I hope that you were here to study that with us. But wives can make a great contribution to marital happiness by recognizing the basic difference between themselves and their husbands. They can make a great contribution to the happiness of their marriage by refusing to brand a strong desire upon the part of their husbands as either a lack of love for them (the wives) or a lack of spirituality in general. Even though I have emphasized that a husband may cause unhappiness by his selfishness and lack of thoughtfulness in marital relations, at the same time, wives must recognize their own responsibility in this matter. In the ideal marriage, each is willing to forego his own for the happiness and pleasure of his partner. In the ideal marriage, each is willing to sacrifice himself for the good of the other. When one has advanced to the point that he is actually more interested in the welfare and pleasure of his marriage partner, then he has become a mature partner in marriage. In a marriage in which the desire of the husband is strong and frequent and the desire of the wife is less frequent, the ideal husband is willing to forego and control his desire to less frequency and to channel his urge in other directions of activity. But at the same time, the wife is willing — and even anxious — to see that her husband is not deprived. And she makes sure that her efforts are not mere acquiescence. She makes sure that her actions are those of a loving, devoted, affectionate wife

and not those of a grouchy, disgruntled wife who really doesn't wish to be bothered!

As an eight point as to how wives can help to make their marriages successful ones, I suggest this: *wives should not allow the problems and tensions of running the home day by day to cause them to be irritable and caustic with their husbands.* A wife who has several children faces problems every day. Her work is hard and tiring — and, at times, exasperating. Yet she will make a tragic error if, when her husband comes home, she greets him as if *he* were the cause of all her troubles. I have already warned against the husband making this mistake as regards his problems. A wife should share her problems and discuss them with her husband but she must not let them become a source of being irritable and caustic with her husband. She can kindly ask his help, but she must not punish him because she is tired. At this point, let me note that the greatest cause of people being so tired is *tension!* Tension causes more people to be tired than does hard work. When you have worked hard all day, you can snap out of it with a hot shower and a good meal. But you don't snap out of it this way when the cause of your tiredness is tension, worry, and anxiety. Learn to live with the Lord and quit so much worrying. In fact, quit worrying!

In the ninth place, I offer this suggestion as to how a wife can help to make a marriage a success: *she can help to build up and maintain her husband's confidence.* A woman may think that her husband is strong and can take all of the "needling" and ridicule which she can "dish out." But this is likely not true in very many cases. A wife's attitude toward her husband is so important. If he knows that she is really *with* him and really *behind* him, then he can go out to meet the world with a great deal more confidence than he would otherwise. In such circumstances

he can always envision home as a place where people love him and have confidence in him even if no one outside of that home does. This feeling will help him to so act that soon others also will have confidence in him. Many men have been discouraged to the point of failure because of constant failure and carping by their wives. Wives, believe in your husbands and let them know that you believe in them.

Tonight we have studied: (1) some things which apply to both husbands and wives; (2) some things which apply only to the husbands; and (3) some things which apply only to the wives. I have one more point. It is perhaps the most important point of all.

Here is that point: *let husband and wife both faithfully serve and worship God*. Let them both obey Christ, becoming members of His body, the church. Then let them both live soberly and righteously in this present world keeping themselves pure and unspotted from the world. Let them lose themselves in their service to God by serving their fellow man. Let them worship God, not only at appointed times for public worship, but let them worship together with their children in the privacy of their own homes. Let them pray together. Let them study the Bible together.

To every husband and wife who are having trouble in your marriage, may I make this appeal. Will you do this? Will you promise each other that for at least thirty days you will give this a test? Will you promise that for at least thirty days you will *together* read the Bible for at least fifteen minutes. Will you promise that for the same period you will pray together, holding the hands of each other, after you have gone to bed at night? Do that and see what happens to your marriage! After having become Christians, ask the Lord to bless you in your marriage.

Ask Him to help each of you to grow up spiritually and emotionally. Ask Him to help each of you to become more kind, loving, tender, and affectionate. Ask Him to help each of you to become more courteous with each other and more wise in your dealings with your children. Ask Him to help each one of you to become more sacrificial in your love for each other. Ask Him to help each one of you to think less of self and more of the other. Let husbands pray to be less demanding and wives pray to be more concerned for the needs of their husbands. If you will do this, honestly and sincerely, I have no doubt as to what the outcome will be. You will grow closer and closer together and happier and happier as the days come and go.

Now, as we come to the close of this series, let each one of us sincerely and prayerfully strive to become *more adequate persons* so that we may thereby become *more adequate partners* in our marriage. Let us realize that we do not face one another to worship one another but that side by side we face toward God, each striving to help the other to so live as to spend eternity with God when this life is over. Let each of us carry with him, as he leaves this assembly, the thought that other than our union with our Savior the union which we have with our life's companion is the most solemn, serious, tender, and serious union into which human hearts can enter. Let each of us remember that the Lord wills that the union of marriage should be severed only by the hand of death. Let each of us realize this: if our marriages are truly successful then very likely our entire lives will be successful. If our marriages are successful, then we are almost certain to make a success of our lives and in doing so we can be practically assured of success in the rearing of our children and in striving to live faithfully as children of God. May the Lord bless the home of each one.

