

‘And this Gospel shall be preached...’

Matthew 24:14

Sermon Summaries from Ministers of the Worldwide Church of God

Today I would like to discuss one of the great blessings God has given us — marriage. I refer to marriage as a “great blessing” because it *can* be, if the relationship is built and maintained properly. I have been happily married for nearly 27 years now, and the reason is largely because of the training I received at Ambassador College beginning in 1952.

I had gone to Texas A&M, where I studied petroleum engineering. We had some unique classes. But when I came to Ambassador College, I found some unique classes here, too. One of them was sex education. The class has some different, perhaps more technical, names on it now, but it is still the same class. When I took it we had the privilege of having Herbert W. Armstrong as the instructor. He showed us the basic principles of husband-wife relationships so we students would have the guidance we needed to build happy marriages.

So when my wife and I were married by Raymond McNair [deputy chancellor of Ambassador College] in Big Sandy’s [Tex.] Redwood Building, I had received Mr. Armstrong’s firsthand instruction before. My wife and I knew the way to continually nurture a rewarding marriage relationship.

So I put my notes together and have decided to give you today some of the information Mr. Armstrong has offered down through the years. Since 1955 I have heard him say: “Don’t take your marriage for granted. Build it. Work at making it a beautiful, happy, exemplary marriage.” And over the years I’ve seen a lot of growth and beauty in the homes, marriages and families in God’s Church.

Need for frankness and affection

When Mr. Armstrong established Ambassador College, he knew it should be coeducational. One of the drawbacks he’d noticed previously with men and families was that there was no training for wives. Wives didn’t have the same emphasis placed on their roles as men did on theirs. Mr. Armstrong noticed that one cause of failures in men’s lives was the absence of competent wives.

So Mr. Armstrong decided that Ambassador would train wives as well as husbands. And as a matter of fact, in some of the ministerial training sessions we used to

get into, Mr. Armstrong would discuss traits needed in ministers’ wives, like frankness and affection. These qualities are too often lacking in marriages today, as the women are taught to be shy and yielding and the men are taught to be forceful and aggressive. You don’t see openness, compassion and meekness in marriages. You see yelling, bickering, emotional outbursts and immaturity. God intended for mates to express love for each other like the man and woman did in the Song of Solomon.

The movie *Fiddler On the Roof* illustrates this kind of love. In a moving moment, this vigorous, hardworking man says to his wife, “Do you love me?” After a pause she replies, “Why, I’ve been with you for 24 years — I’ve brought up your children . . .” He waits a little bit, then looks at her again and asks, “Do you love me?” She answers: “Well, don’t be silly! I’ve lived with you all these years, and we’ve been through a lot of tests and predicaments . . .” There is a pause, and then the man looks at her again and asks, “Yes, but do you love me?”

This man needed somebody to express appreciation, joy and delight. But we live in an age that discourages expression of feeling and affection.

We need this kind of expressiveness in our marriages. Half the confessions of love in the Song of Solomon came from the man, but the other half came from the woman. It should be just as natural for the woman to express appreciation and concern for the man as it is for the man to express love for the woman.

Proper leadership

When I was a young man planning to get married, I wanted to be sure that I was in authority over my wife. Maybe that’s natural for a man. There’s a biblical command that the man be head of the family. But there has to be a right balance.

Mr. Armstrong has said husbands should *dominate* but never *domineer*. Do you know the difference?

I was by nature a domineering person. I didn’t know it and when people told me I didn’t believe it. When I was

going home from college in 1953 to get married, a female student

wrote some memorable remarks in my yearbook. She said:

“Now Dean, be kind and gentle and

THE CARE AND FEEDING OF A HAPPY MARRIAGE

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understanding toward Maxine." I thought, what in the world! Doesn't she know me? Of course I'm going to be kind and gentle! But I didn't see myself as I was.

But finally I learned a lesson I'll never forget. We were in Israel, standing on the balcony of a Jerusalem hotel, when a man I love very much said, "Dean, I'd like to talk with you." My wife and I had been traveling with him and his wife for about four weeks. He told me: "I feel I need to bring this to your attention. You know, you're overbearing toward your wife. You're domineering!" Well, by then I could understand that he was right.

Mr. Armstrong used to come all the way from California to Chicago by train. He would spend a day or two with us and then catch another train to New York. He would ride from Los Angeles, Calif., all the way to New York on a train — a trip that took several days and nights. Why? Because his wife was afraid to fly. Mrs. Armstrong would fly when she had to — she was willing to endure the fear and nervousness — but Mr. Armstrong wouldn't make her do that. He was too considerate and understanding.

When you learn to balance leadership and authority, you can develop kindness and consideration.

The marriage ceremony the Church has used for years begins with Ephesians 5:21. As a young, newly married man, I would have liked for it to begin with verse 22, the part that says, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands." But the ceremony starts in verse 21, "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God."

Do you mean to tell me a man should listen to his wife? Are there times when a man should even be corrected by his wife? Yes. The wife's input must be an integral part of decisions that are made.

God created mankind male and female and said they are to function as a team. God said the husband is to be head of the wife. Therefore, in the fear of God, a man should be afraid to misuse his authority, and a woman should be afraid to rebel against God's authority.

Mr. Armstrong got this message about proper leadership across to us clearly at one conference when he said, "If I find out any of you men are belittling your wives, you are going to be out of a job!" That really got our attention. For men to belittle or domineer their wives is certainly condemnable.

Responsible use of authority

People must develop the responsibility necessary to properly use authority. If they don't, they will end up like the person who directs the kids across the street at school crossings. First thing you know he is out there directing traffic like a policeman. The next thing you know he is a self-appointed buck sergeant ordering everybody around. If you're not careful when you're given a little authority, you'll start over-using — and misusing — it.

Take one classic statement Mr. Armstrong has made: "I would never marry a woman who couldn't wear the pants. But I never would be married to one who did." To me, that is perfect balance.

I counseled students for five years in Big Sandy, and it was surprising to me how many young men would say: "I really don't know what to do. There's one girl I really like — she's shy, meek and yielding. Then there's this other girl who's a real challenge, you know — it's always a job for me to stay ahead of her. She's always pushing me to accomplish more. So I'm in a predicament, because humanly it would be easy to rule over the first girl, but it would be a real prod to lead the other."

Well, nobody would enjoy being married to someone who doesn't have any get-up-and-go or any backbone — someone who's as limp as a dishrag. It's a challenge to be married to someone who keeps you on your toes.

So I really appreciate Mr. Armstrong's statement. There's good counsel in it for some of you.

Subjection to your mate

Women's liberation has profoundly affected society, and it has affected us in the Church — and our marriages. Now you hear of people who want to take "obey" out of the marriage ceremony and write their own vows.

Mr. Armstrong said, "Show me a woman who wants a 50-50 marriage and I'll show you one who wants to wear the pants." What is a 50-50 marriage? How do you have one? Perhaps you take turns making decisions, or you make decisions together. But what if you can't agree? Who decides what course of action you will take together?

Any of us who might have a modernistic attitude of wanting a 50-50 marriage should know that the Bible says a woman's delight is to be married to one who can lead her. She needs someone she can respect — who will listen to her counsel and yet not be henpecked. Notice Peter's dual admonitions: "Ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands . . . Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge" (I Pet. 3:1, 7).

Don't try to cram your tastes down your partner's throat, and don't try to overlord the person. I've seen cases where a man would marry and within months the woman looked and acted totally different. The man had enforced his tastes on her. He tried to remake her into the kind of woman he thought would please him, and only succeeded in destroying her self-respect and drive.

We all have different tastes. My wife doesn't like the same kind of music or sports I do. There are areas where we have the same interests and areas where we don't. But that's no big deal. The point is that the husband should dwell with his wife according to knowledge, and be the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the Church (Eph. 5:23). How is Christ the head of the Church? "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it" (verse 25). Christ, the head of the Church, loved it so much He gave His life for it.

"So ought men to love their wives"

A lot of men, either symbolically or literally, give their lives in marriage. They go out and face all kinds of

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pressures in the world. Most men live several years less than their wives, due to high blood pressure and heart failures. Christ gave Himself for the Church. So the husband should have a giving, self-sacrificing attitude for his wife.

Notice verse 26, "That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word." In other words, it's the husband's responsibility to lead his wife spiritually. He should see that they study and pray together, not as an overlord but as an example and a leader.

How many of you women have been duped by society's ideal man — a dark, curly-headed, handsome, flashy dream boat? That's ridiculous! The real "dream boat" is somebody who is going to be a Christian leader, who is going to be kind to you and be the kind of husband God commands him to be.

"That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (verse 27). The man's desire as the leader of his wife should be to bring his wife to that condition.

If a wife has a husband who leads that way, then she's going to be more able to be subject, to submit to her own husband as God commands and requires.

"So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth it and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church" (verses 28-29).

The virtue of peacemaking

Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God" (Matt. 5:9). When we're children of God we're going to be peacemakers among all the nations of this earth.

But where are you going to get all the training you will need to bring peace to this world? You're supposed to be getting it now!

What if one person is having a bad day or he or she gets up in a bad mood? Do you have vision and wisdom? That is the time to say to yourself: "Now is not the time to open the big mouth. Now is not the time to say anything. Now is the time to be still and wait till later." Then, when you can sit down calmly and coolly together in a different atmosphere, you can settle things. Many times you can prevent arguments or fights in your marriage.

Keys to happier marriages

I have a list I carry to remind me what I am supposed to be as a husband. Maybe you can apply these points, too.

1. *Husbands, love your wives* (Eph. 5:25). God commands you to be expressive. Let your wife know you love her. It's a good idea to commit yourself to telling your wife every day that you love her and consider her half of your success. On the other hand, the two top jobs of a wife are to encourage and inspire her husband.

2. *Dwell with your wife according to knowledge* (1 Pet.

3:7). "Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them" (Col. 3:19). God commands you husbands to rule your natures and emotions and to control your tongues. Don't be at odds with your wife.

3. *Accept your wife's natural difference from you.* God made men and women differently and saw that everything was very good (Gen. 1:31). Neither sex is greater than the other. They mutually excel each other — they blend together into perfection. Vive la difference!

4. *Husbands, be the head of your wives.* Lead — be an example. Be in authority and dominate, but don't domineer. Appreciate your wife and listen to her wisdom.

5. *Remember to be a peacemaker.* Develop self-control and compassion. Remind yourself of this duty daily.

6. *See to your wife's health.* The husband is to a large degree responsible for the wife's physical well-being, just as the wife is to a large degree responsible for the husband's physical well-being. Make sure you both get the proper diet and sufficient exercise.

7. *Study the Bible and pray together.* How long has it been since you've applied this suggestion? The husband should lead his family spiritually as well as physically.

8. *Schedule a big date alone at least once a month!* Mark it on a family calendar — make time for it among all your other family activities.

9. *Set aside time to talk.* Communication problems are a main cause of marriage failures. Schedule a time when you're not in a hurry so you can discuss the home, family problems and how you can help each other grow.

10. *Value your wife's input.* Notice a quality of the virtuous woman, "She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness" (Prov. 31:26). Your wife should be your helpmeet in every way. If I were a girl and I didn't know a man appreciated my character and thought highly of my wisdom — if he just thought of me physically — I would be highly offended. Don't be too high and mighty to accept good judgment from your wife.

11. *Don't let the sun set on your wrath.* Don't let problems magnify and roots of bitterness grow. God's way is to get things settled day by day: "Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" (Matt. 6:34).

These points have been a help to our marriage for more than 26 years. Perhaps they can help yours too. I hope we can all have happier marriages and be able to be more thankful for them in the future.

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