

GROW IN GRACE

NEWSLETTER

Volume 39, No.18, April 30, 2013 / Southside Baptist Church & Christian School / P.O. Box 1594 / 1028 South Water Avenue, Gallatin, TN 37066 (615) 452-5951 / **"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our LORD and Saviour JESUS CHRIST. To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen."** (2 Peter 3:18)

NOTE: Last week we asked, "SHALL I STAY IN MY PRESENT MARRIAGE?" We answered the question by setting forth Biblical teaching on the permanence of marriage and how to clear one's conscience from past failures, etc. This week's article is a follow-up—setting forth good encouragement on the 'HOW' to save a troubled marriage, from Dr. Ed Wheat's book, ***Love Life for Every Married Couple***. - Grace to all! James Bell

How to Save Your Marriage Alone, edited from Dr. Ed Wheat

Paul D. Meier says that there are "only 3 choices for any person involved in an unhappy marriage: **(1) Get a divorce** —the greatest cop-out and by far the most immature choice; **(2) Tough out** the marriage without working to improve it — another immature decision but not quite as irresponsible as divorce; and **(3) Maturely face up to personal hang-ups and choose to build an intimate marriage out of the existing one** —the only really mature choice to make." Possibly in your case, the moment of truth has come, for your partner probably has already ruled out the second option and chosen the first without even considering the third. **The question is, "What will you do?"** Surrender to the pressures of the world's way of thinking and the emotions of the moment? Or make a choice based on confidence in the eternal truths of Scripture?

The stakes are higher than one may realize at the time. One choice clearly leads to the bitterness and defeat of divorce as well as lost opportunities for blessing. "Divorce is more painful than death," a woman told me, "because it's never really over." Dr Meier says that when couples run away from their problems by divorcing and remarrying, **"then there are four miserable people instead of just two.... Why spread misery?"** he asks. "Bad marriages are contagious! Numerous psychiatric marriage relationships get divorced —no matter how good their intentions may be — they nearly always remarry into the very same type of neurotic relationship they had before."

When you choose the pathway of irrevocable commitment to your mate and your marriage — regardless of how troubled your relationship may seem—

you will find that choice leading you into a place of *agape* love and peace and personal growth. These are just some of the rewards, for the chances are very good that you will also be able to enjoy the blessings that God has wanted to bestow on your marriage from the beginning.

I am not suggesting that the healing of a marriage is an easy process when one partner resists it. But are any easy choices open to you, after all? Torn relationships involve pain, whatever you do about them. As Peter points out in his first letter, it is far better to suffer (if suffer you must) for doing *right*, than for doing wrong. He makes it clear that God's favor and blessing shine on the one who patiently suffers, if necessary, in order to do His will. Meeting your marriage problems in a biblical manner is productive rather than pointless, and whatever hurts your encounter will be less damaging than the long-term effects of divorce would be.

“The very word *divorce* should be cut out of the vocabulary of a couple when they marry,” a woman with a restored marriage said, “because God's way is so much better for anyone who is willing to give it a try.” Another woman, considering the turbulent events of the past year that had driven her to grow emotionally and spiritually while she “loved her husband back” to their marriage, said, “It's been all gain for me. I'm a different person now. The process was humbling, but it was worth it!”

A man said, **“During the time when I was trying to win my wife's love and hold our family together, sometimes I got so tired of rejection that I didn't feel anything except a determination to do what the Bible said and leave the results with God. The only thing I was sure of was that somehow God would work it out for my good because He promised that in His Word.** I never imagined the love affair He has actually given us. He really does do more than we can ask or think!”

While these comments from the far side of the problem are encouraging, I understand that the feelings you may be experiencing right now within the problem are less than pleasant. Many others have been where you are now and can empathize with what you are going through: shock, hurt, rejection, emotional confusion, temptation to bitterness, and of course, pressures from all sides that sometimes make you want to give up. My heartfelt goal is to help you clarify your thoughts, stabilize your emotions, and learn to behave in a consistent, purposeful way that will save your marriage and bring a new dimension of love into your relationship.

So, if you are willing to make a commitment to your marriage based on the eternal principles and promises of the Word of God, you can take heart and let hope grow in promises of the Word of God, you can take heart and let hope grow in proportion to your commitment. **Contrary to what the world believes, one person can save a marriage.**

In fact, most of the people I counsel belong in this category. Even when both come to see me, one is usually dragging the other along, in a manner of speaking, and only one really cares about the outcome in most cases. Marriage counselor Anne Kristin Carroll says, “If you think there's no hope because you are the only one in your

relationship who wants or cares enough to try to save your marriage, you are wrong!" She adds, **"In my experience most torn marriages are brought to new life, new vitality by the interest, basically, of only one party."**

This has been my experience as well. **I have seen numerous marriages saved when only one partner applied biblical principles in a whole hearted commitment to the mate and the marriage. Some have not been saved.** Usually this is because the individual is convinced that nothing will change the partner—that the longstanding problem of alcoholism or financial irresponsibility or whatever cannot be solved, and he or she simply gives up.

Occasionally, the partner desiring a divorce has developed such a strong emotional attachment to another person that it is not broken off *in time* to save the marriage. Often, however, this infatuation ends while the divorce is being delayed and the unfaithful partner thanks the committed mate for standing fast and preserving the marriage. In a relatively few cases, one partner pressured by family and "loyal" friends, develops a deep bitterness toward the other and is actually encouraged in this hostility by parents and even, sometimes, church members so that efforts at reconciliation may be unavailing.

But in the great majority of cases, the outcome depends squarely on the committed partner's ability to behave consistently in accord with biblical principles designed by the Author of marriage. So, in a very literal sense, it is all up to you. You need not expect your partner to do anything constructive about the marriage if he or she wants out.

Clarifying Your Thoughts

When the Bible says, "Gird up the loins of your mind" ([1 Peter 1:13](#)), it means to get your mental powers in a state of alertness for proper action. You must do this without delay. Often the Lord will provide the opportunity for some quiet, uninterrupted Bible study and prayerful consideration of God's plan for your situation. You may also learn some important things about yourself during this time.

When one husband moved out, his parents lovingly helped the wife by keeping the children several weeks while she prepared mentally and spiritually for the challenges ahead. **One young wife** was ready to dissolve her marriage until a friend in her garden club led her to the Lord. "I only knew two Scriptures at the beginning," the wife said, "but they were exactly what I needed: 'God is not a man, that he should lie' ([Numbers 23:19](#)) and 'With God nothing shall be impossible' ([Luke 1:37](#)). "With those truths as a foundation I began to study the Bible, desperately trying to dig out God's purpose for marriage and all that He had to say about it. **I found out for myself that if I were to obey Him, then I would have to become committed to my marriage and my husband, even though he was involved with another woman and we were on the verge of divorce.** "Coming to this decision didn't make things any easier emotionally at first, but it did show me a clear path of action, and the situation actually became less complicated because there was no more confusion about what to do! I refused to sign the divorce papers. I had gathered

evidence identifying the other woman and proving my husband's unfaithfulness. I destroyed it all. I didn't need it anymore."

A University of Chicago professor described this generation's dilemma with the now familiar quotation: "We lack the language to teach what is right and wrong." But the Bible-believing Christian caught in an emotionally fraught situation does not have that problem. The language of God concerning divorce is plain enough for any reader. For example: For the Lord, the God of Israel says: I hate divorce and marital separation, and him who covers his garment [his wife] with violence. Therefore keep a watch upon your spirit [that it may be controlled by My Spirit], that you deal not treacherously and faithlessly [with your marriage mate] ([Malachi 2:16 AMPLIFIED](#)).

He replied, 'Have you never read that He Who made them from the beginning made them male and female'. And said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be united firmly (joined inseparably) to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder' (separate) ([Matthew 19:4-6 AMPLIFIED](#)).

As you try to gain clarity of thought concerning your marital situation viewed in light of the teaching of Scripture, I suggest that you read the first five chapters of the book, *Love Life for Every Married Couple* and search the Scriptures that have to do with marriage. Let me remind you once more of the eternal principle that undergirds the biblical counsel we offer: It is God's will in every marriage for the couple to love each other with an absorbing spiritual, emotional, and physical attraction that continues to grow throughout their lifetime together.

It should be crystal clear that God intends for you and your mate to picture the love-bond of Christ and His church and that you must beware of substitutes who sometimes find their way into the vacuum of a troubled relationship. Obviously, infidelity and divorce are paths that move away from God's plan and blessing. But when you pour yourself into restoring love to your marriage, you can be sure that the force of His will is at work with you in the process.

It is important to fill your mind with positive biblical input: biblical counseling, preaching, and teaching; good books and Bible-study tapes; and friends who will affirm you in your commitment to your marriage. You need to take in truth from those who are as committed to the permanence of marriage as the Bible is. And don't listen to anyone else! Develop tunnel vision in this area as [Proverbs 4:25-27](#) commands: Let your eyes look directly ahead, and let your gaze be fixed straight in front of you. Watch the path of your feet, and all your ways will be established. Do not turn to the right nor to the left; turn your foot from evil (*NASB*).

You need to maintain this total mental commitment to the truth or you will be swamped by waves of human opinion and bad advice, sometimes from seemingly religious people. One young man came to me, confused because he had been told to do nothing to win back his wife. He had been told to concentrate on his vertical relationship with God. I said to him, "This is true, but you can please God only when you are doing what the Bible says you are to do. You must be right in line with

God's Word. We have no other direction for this life. When we are in total accord with the Word, then we can relax and God has the freedom to work with us.

He always works with us on the basis of the information that we have from His Word. So the more you know of the Word of God concerning marriage and love and His abhorrence of divorce, the more equipped you will be to let God do His full work and have His full way in your life."

"I had to take a stand on this matter of outside influence," a wife told me. "Everyone has been anxious to give me advice about my marriage. I refuse to discuss it with people who hold an unbiblical viewpoint, or people who try to turn me against my husband, or people who make me feel sorry for myself and encourage weakness in me. **I can't afford to be around worldly friends anymore. They tear me down; they tear my husband down.** They may mean well, but they are so misguided. I want to be with people who will stand with me and support me when I might falter."

When your mind is settled, your thoughts clarified, and your commitment made, you will find that you no longer lie at the mercy of outside events, reacting to every new circumstance with fresh pain and bewilderment. Instead, your viewpoint becomes, **"This is what I am going to do, no matter what, because it is God's way to do it. I can count on His wisdom, and I can trust Him with the results of a course of action based on His Word."**

"I'm not standing by my marriage anymore on the basis of what the outcome will be," one woman told me. "People urge me to dump my husband, give up on him because he's made my life miserable; they tell me I deserve someone better, that I wouldn't have any trouble finding someone else to love me. My answer is that marriage is sacred; marriage is permanent; I am committed by my marriage vows; I am one flesh with my husband; and then I really shock them! **I tell them that even if there is no happy ending for our marriage, I will not regret the stand I have taken. I will know that I made the right decision and followed the only course possible for me. I will have done all that I could.**

"But my trust is not in what I am doing," she added. "It is in God and His Word. He has a perfect, loving plan for my life, and He's wise enough and powerful enough to carry it out, if I cooperate by following His counsel. So I'm going to keep on obeying Him in my marriage and I'll leave the results with Him. I am at peace with that."

A happy wife wrote me a note of thanks for my counsel which gave her the courage to stick with her marriage. She said, "One little thing you said to me meant so much. You said, 'So what if your husband doesn't tell you he loves you right now!' I knew you were right. It really wasn't that important. " **This wife found that putting up with a little rejection was worth it in the long run in order to have a revitalized marriage.**

I have talked with many women who tell me that when they do not feel their husband's love, the Lord has a way of loving them that is almost tangible. "Like being in the sunshine, just feeling the warmth of His love," several wives agreed.

A lovely young wife carried that a step further in her own trying situation. She said that it was often difficult dressing to go out for the evening with her husband because she knew in advance that he would not treat her the way she longed to be treated. **So she developed the habit of thinking of the Lord Jesus as her friend and escort of the evening. "It helped me tremendously," she said. "I looked my best for Him, I behaved my best for Him, and I was constantly aware of His steadying presence with me!"**

In summary, you need to give love to your mate biblically, emotionally, and physically whether you receive a response or not. This is altogether possible through *agape* love. One wife, whose husband was involved with another woman, said, "I tried to show him that my love for him did not depend on how he treated me. I still showed him physical affection. I said to him sometimes, 'I love you, no matter what you are doing right now, and I believe the Lord means for us to be together.' I sent him little cards with appropriate messages that expressed my caring while we were apart. And, do you know, when we reconciled, I found that he had saved every one of them!"

I asked some wives who had been through the experience to give me their list of do's and don'ts for any woman trying to save her marriage. **Here are the excellent suggestions they compiled:**

**There can be no growth in your relationship as long as there is doubt as to your commitment to your marriage. Make your commitment! **When your husband withholds his love, trust the Lord to meet your emotional needs. He won't let you down! **Give your husband honor, love, and biblical respect even though his actions do not deserve it. Give him warm acceptance no matter what. The more hopeless your situation is, the more your loving behavior is apt to be accepted as genuine. **Don't try to reform your husband. Just love him. **Live one day at a time. **Don't try to do it on your own. The Lord is with you!

**Don't be bitter against anyone in the situation. Never turn your children against their father. Forgive! **Don't ask family or friends to take sides against your husband. **Don't discuss your intimate marriage problems. Don't give fuel to gossip. Confide in the Lord, your counselor, and perhaps a close Christian friend whom you can trust to keep silence. **Choose your biblical counselor wisely. *Never* discuss your problems with a friend of the opposite sex. **Spend as much time in the Word of God as possible. **Concentrate on yourself, redeeming the mistakes you made, and asking God to show you how to change, rather than concentrating on your partner's failures. **Do not separate. Encourage your husband to stay in the home, no matter what. **Do not give your husband a divorce. Do all in your power to delay or prevent it. If you must consult a lawyer, make it clear to the lawyer that it is only for your financial protection and that of your children. Find a Christian lawyer who will help you preserve your marriage. **Spend your time with people who will encourage you in spiritual growth. **Do not overcompensate with your children. They need your love and stability while their father is gone, but they still need discipline. It will be hard to build a new love relationship with your husband when he does come home if the children are out of control. **Do not try to defend yourself from gossip or criticism. Keep your mouth shut. The Lord will fight for you and you will hold your peace. **Remember that

the most innocent thing you say will get twisted. Avoid loose talk and do not listen to tale-bearing. **When you do anything (large or small) to pull the marriage apart, you are going against God's will. Let that be your guideline for all decisions. **Don't expect your husband to change overnight when he does come back home. **The hardest time may be when you are reconciled and you have a tendency to fall back into old habit patterns. Don't do it! **Hope all things, believe all things, and endure all things.

[IMPORTANT NOTE: *The authors, Dr Ed Wheat and Gloria Okes Perkins go on from this point to include a lot more valuable advice. Due to copyright privileges, we cannot print the entire chapter, even if we had the space. **This article is just a portion of one of the 16 outstanding chapters of LOVE LIFE For Every Married Couple: How to fall in love, Stay in love, Rekindle your love.***

GET THIS BOOK. READ IT. APPLY IT. HAVE SEVERAL ON HAND TO GIVE TO OTHERS!]

SOUTHSIDE NEWS NOTES for May!

1. Ladies Bible Study—(stay tune for the next study, after summer!)

2. WEDNESDAYS: PRAYER SERVICE at 7:00PM! / YOUTH: Wednesdays, 6-8pm @ Southside Church building!

3. Thursdays @ 6:30pm: OUTREACH

4. Saturdays @ 8am: Men's Fellowship/Bible Study

Sunday Schedule for May 5, 12, 19, 26

1. 9:30am- Sunday School

2. 10:45am- Morning Worship / Children's Church

3. Noon Fellowship Meal {Covered Dish} - (May 12- No meal or 1pm)

4. 1:00pm Early Afternoon Service (May 19, 1pm- LORD'S SUPPER)

SPECIAL MAY NOTES: MAY 12— Mother's day : *Sunday School and Morning Worship only.* Recognition of Mom's during the Worship Service.

THE STARTING OF A NEW TRADITION: For many years on Mother's Day and Father's Day, we have always given 'tokens' of appreciation, as flowers, book marks, pens, key chains, etc. That's all fine; but those 'token expressions' of gratitude for Moms and Dads quickly fade.

I AM ASKING that we start a new tradition. The idea is from the Gideon's Bible Memorial program— with that, one either gives Gideon Bibles in memory of someone; OR they have Gideon Expression Cards for occasions like Birthdays, graduation, weddings, etc... and when one of those cards is sent— a Bible is sent somewhere in the world.

THUS and henceforth on Mother's day and on Father's day— Let us give Gideon Bibles in memory of Moms or Dads **and/or** in appreciation for them; **and/or** let us give extra special OFFERINGS for one or more of our Missionaries— especially on behalf of Odell and Beth.

May 2, from 9am until 2pm and from 5pm until 7pm— SOUTHSIDE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL OPEN HOUSE! STOP BY AND SEE THE SCHOOL IN ACTION! DO YOU KNOW families with Children? Encourage parents to stop by!

www.southsidegallatin.org

May 24— Senior Banquet, SCS Graduation and Awards Night!