

A Successful Marriage



By Gordon H. Richards

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A SUCCESSFUL MARRIAGE

INTRODUCTION

The remark has been made numerous times that marriages do not last very long any more. This is only a partially true statement, because there are many couples who have been married for a long time. A friend of mine had been married three times. His first wife passed away after they had been married over fifty years. Later he remarried, then after a number of years his second wife died. He finally passed away after he had his 100th birthday, before his third wife died.

Several years ago as I was installing the last purlin for a steel building, I fell 14 feet and broke my hip and pelvis. During the time I was in the hospital my wife came every day to see me. She was happy to see the daily progress being made. After being there several days, a lady came and asked me what I wanted on our anniversary cake, as we would shortly celebrate our fiftieth wedding anniversary. I told her to put "Half Century Wedding Anniversary, sequel to follow," on the cake. Several years have gone by since then, and we are still working on our sequel. Do I expect to see the second half century wedding anniversary? Not really, because I am expecting the Rapture to come first. However, if the Lord does not come right away, I will not be surprised if we do, because of His promise in the following verse:

Psalm 103:5 Who satisfies your mouth with good things, **so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.**

You might say that you do not have a happy marriage. What are you doing to improve it? Ask the Lord to show you what to do for change to take place. According to the following verse, He will give you the desires of your heart.

Psalm 37:3 Trust in the Lord, and do good; dwell in the land, **and feed on His faithfulness. 4. Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart. 5.** Commit your way to the Lord, **trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass. 6.** He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday. **7.** Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him; do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass.

Start praying that the Lord will bless your spouse and meet his or her every need. Ask the Lord to show you what He wants you to do, then expect to see a better marriage.

1

A SUCCESSFUL MARRIAGE

When two people first get married they have high hopes that theirs is going to be the perfect marriage. Their "journey" through married life is going to be like a ride in a boat on a fast flowing river. If they do nothing they will be washed downstream, hit the rapids, and possibly be shipwrecked. To have a great marriage it now becomes necessary to use the oars and work at reaching the destination, which is upstream. Both must work at making the marriage a success.

Marriage was ordained by God since the time of Adam. The Bible teaches: "He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor from the Lord," Proverbs 18:22. This will prove to be true all our lives when we allow the Lord to have the control over ourselves and our marriage.

HARMONY: FALLING IN LOVE

There are three kinds of love. The first is **Romantic love**. This is the kind of love that is felt during the days of courtship. It needs to be kept alive during the entire marriage, regardless of what situations the couple finds themselves in.

The second kind of love is **Mutual concern and passionate kindness**, and is developed into a pattern of living. It enables the couple to continue loving each other, even when the problems come, and these will be troubled times.

The third kind of love is **Godly love, which comes from God**. This is the kind of love that enables you to forgive the other person even when they are at their worst. It gives the ability to go through the storms of life without quitting when big problems come along.

When a couple starts dating they see a lot of things that attract them to each other, both physical and mental attractions, as well as many things that are of common interest. New couples will have the tendency to overlook the faults or problems in each other. The statement: "Love is blind" becomes very obvious. Sometimes the problem is noticed, but the person says: "Ok, well, that will work itself out." Both are looking toward a bright future with the other. This will only be possible when a committed effort is made on both sides to work out the problems together, instead of ignoring them, **or trying to change the other person**.

WALKING IN LOVE

Love is blind toward faults for a period of time. The faults or problems then become more conspicuous, and several options become available. The time for "walking in love" now begins. Each has to accept the other **AS THEY ARE**, and learn to love and live with the problems. This now becomes **a choice of the will** on the part of each person.

A marriage is heading for trouble when one, or both, have the attitude that they will change the other person as soon as they get married. This may work if the partner has a weak nature or wants to **avoid a fight at any cost**. One will end up not wanting to make any decisions and the other will

become domineering, which will lead to a poor marriage.

The better approach to changing a situation is to **look for changes that need to be made in your own life**. As you start to make adjustments in your own life, you will begin to reap a harvest of what you have just sown. You will see your mate make changes in his or her life as well. The changes in both lives will bring more love and unity in the marriage.

The success of the home will depend on mutual understanding, and sometimes requires delicate adjustments to take care of the differences in the back-grounds of the couple. Devotion and loyalty to each other are very necessary, but an understanding of the needs and the ability to meet those needs must also play an important part if the marriage is going to be really successful.

The marriage must be considered a duet that is harmonizing to bring out the best in each other. Musical notes, when played in the right combination, produce a pleasing sound. When musical notes are played in wrong combinations, it will only produce discord. When a band is playing in discord, the tendency will be to stop the music. Marriage needs to be treated differently. In order to bring out the best in the other person, both need to harmonize their words and actions, so as to obtain the best combination. This will meet each other's needs and help build their confidence and joy. The motto should become, "In honor giving preference to one another," Romans 12:10.

Sometimes people have entered marriage with a self-centered attitude, wanting to make sure that they get "what they deserve" out of the marriage. You are going to find that you reap what you sow. When you plant self-centeredness, you will reap a bumper crop of the same thing. It would be far better to plant the type of seed that asks: "Am I giving the best I possibly can to this marriage?" When each one thinks of the other person's happiness, they will reap a wonderful harvest of joy. The more you try to make your partner happy, the more you will see it coming back to you. Each one must make an ongoing genuine effort to make life more satisfactory for their partner.

Happiness can be affected by outward circumstances, such as sickness in the family, losing your employment, or the car breaks down, etc. Joy comes from within and it is not affected by the outside problems. On occasion it is going to be necessary to make adjustments. Get rid of any spirit of complaining, unforgiveness, or bitterness, so that a spirit of joy can start to grow. If this is not done, it will produce a bad harvest.

A good test to see if one has a successful marriage, is to determine the

amount of happiness you have when you're together. There may be things that annoy, but strive to increase the pleasing experiences and decrease the annoying ones.

A good marriage will produce mutual fulfillment in the lives of both partners. Goals in life, ambitions, etc., must be taken into consideration in order to produce a good, lasting marriage. A wonderful marriage will be more probable when each one is proud of their partner, and is happy to introduce their mate to others. This is not to be a phony act, but a caring lifestyle that must develop.

Love is not just a way of feeling; it must become a way of thinking and acting as well. When you start to mature in these areas you will find that the joy within you will start to grow in greater ways. Develop a lifestyle of not just trying to please yourself, but of demonstrating a life of love to others. This must not be just an emotional type of love, but a nature of caring for those around you. **Love is a choice.**

One time one of the scribes came to Jesus and asked Him what was the greatest commandment. The answer Jesus gave could also be used in the family setting. In Mark 12:31 you could add: "You shall love your husband or wife as yourself."

Mark 12:30 "And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength." This is the first commandment. **31.** And the second, like it, is this: "You shall love your (husband/wife), neighbor as yourself." "There is no other commandment greater than these."

John 13:34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

There are two verses that give commands concerning your love for your mate, to be done whether you feel like it or not.

Colossians 3:19 Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them.

Titus 2:4 That they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children.

There are some, who decide that they don't love their spouse any more, need to realize that **love is a choice**. They can choose to love, **OR** they can look for reasons **why they don't want to love the person**. Frequently a problem comes which starts the person to thinking that the love for the

spouse is lost. True love comes from God, who is willing to cause the old love to return, **IF THEY WANT IT TO**. The couple must make up their minds **that they want God to help them overcome the difficulties**. They need to ask the Lord to not just bring back the former love, but cause a love that is far better to come in and fill the spirits of both of them. Remember, Satan is out to destroy marriages any way he can.

On one occasion a lady phoned me from an area near Cape Town, South Africa. She and her husband were having marital difficulties. I asked what she wanted to do. Her response was that she wanted a better marriage. I pointed out that the enemy had stolen her marriage, and now according to Proverbs 6:30, 31, she could claim seven times what she lost. I then asked her if she wanted seven husbands, and she laughed and said that she wanted a marriage that was seven times better, which was the response I was looking for. When you are committed to finding answers to your difficulties, you will find that the Lord will help you when you ask Him.

The couple must make a strong commitment they will stay together. They need to ask the Lord to help them honor that commitment. When problems come, they need to see if they can find answers. If there seems to be no answers, ask the Lord to show them what to do or where to go to find help to overcome the problems.

Social pressures in favor of divorce may influence the couple to want to get one, but that should not be an option. God gives us His view in the following verses:

Malachi 2:13 And this is the second thing you do: you cover the altar of the Lord with tears, with weeping and crying; **so He does not regard the offering anymore, nor receive it with good will from your hands. 14.** Yet you say, "For what reason?" because the Lord has been witness between you and the wife of your youth, with whom you have dealt treacherously; yet **she is your companion and your wife by covenant. 15.** But did He not make them one, having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth. **16. "For the Lord God of Israel says that HE HATES DIVORCE, for it covers one's garment with violence,"** says the Lord of hosts. "Therefore take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously."

The Bible does permit divorce, but Jesus gave the reason behind agreeing to in one, in the following verse. He was stating that God allowed it because of **the hardness of the person's heart**. When you ask the Lord to help you, you will find that He will give the ability to overcome the problem that is making you contemplate divorce.

Matthew 19:8 He said to them, "Moses, **because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.**"

What does Malachi 2:14 mean when it states: "She is your wife by covenant"? In Bible times the concept of a covenant was very common in the Middle East. The word "covenant" in its Hebrew form is used nearly 300 times in the Bible. In the simplest form, it is an all encompassing agreement between two parties that covers a number of promises. This mutual understanding between the two people binds them with specific obligations. This agreement commits everything each has, to belong to the other person.

Covenants were frequently made, making reference to God as their witness. This was an indication that they were expecting God to hold them responsible for the fulfillment of the covenant.

One step in the covenant making was the ceremony of the exchange of names. This is seen when people accept Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. They are making a covenant with God, and as part of the exchange of names are called "Christian." In modern days the lady is no longer called by her maiden name, but takes on the last name of her husband.

The covenant of marriage is a life-long commitment, with the expectation that God is not only a witness, but is also going to enable you to live up to it. Breaking the covenant, or in other words, getting a divorce, according to Malachi 2:16, is an act of violence in the eyes of the Lord. God is claiming that you are dealing treacherously with your spirit when you were involved with divorce.

What can you do if you had a divorce in the past? When you come to Him and ask to be forgiven for mistakes you have made in the past, you will find that He will honor His promise in 1 John 1:9, providing the two conditions are met.

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

1. Forgiving the offender

Matthew 6:14 For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. **15. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.**

2. Forsaking your wrongdoing.

Proverbs 28:13 He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and **FORSAKES THEM WILL HAVE MERCY.**

Ask the Lord to forgive you for any feelings of bitterness you may have had toward your previous mate, and ask Him to **give you the ability to forgive** anything you may have against that person. Then expect Him to fulfill the following verse in your life:

Psalms 103:12 As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.

REMARRIAGE

There are many couples who have had a divorce and have later remarried. Based on what the Bible says, according to Matthew 5:31-32, are they living in sin? Most of the time - even if they wanted, remarrying the previous spouse may be out of the question, because each may have remarried. Two wrongs don't make a right; a second divorce isn't the answer.

There has been a lot of controversy about what the Bible teaches on the subject. Some people have become **very legalistic in their thinking.** Their attitude sometimes is, that God will forgive you if you kill your spouse, but He will not forgive you if you get a divorce. Sadly they seem to completely ignore the grace of God — and the wisdom and guidance of all the other Scriptures in the Bible. Others appear to go to great lengths to find ways to sidestep what the Bible teaches, inferring that it's no longer relevant. Both approaches are dangerous.

Malachi 2:13-16 clearly shows that God hates divorce, and that He considers the marriage vow a sacred covenant. However there are certain situations in which divorce is permitted, and a person may remarry. This is seen in Deuteronomy 24:1-4, Matthew 19:3-12). The Scriptures indicate that those who take marriage lightly, and **get a divorce for trivial reasons will be held accountable.**

There is no Scripture that states that a divorced person cannot be forgiven. Christians may disagree about whether or not it is appropriate for a divorced Believer to remarry. Both parties need to seek the Lord and study the Scriptures. What should you do in the event you feel that you should not have remarried? The answer is found in 1 John 1:9, which tells you that if you confess your wrongdoing, He is faithful and just to forgive you. The next thing the Lord expects you to do is to make your present marriage the best one possible. The Lord wants you to reflect His nature and character. Make it happen!

Psalm 103:3 **Who forgives ALL your iniquities**, Who heals all your diseases, **12**. As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.

Remember what the above Scriptures state. This means that if the couple has asked the Lord to forgive them, **then He has removed ALL their transgressions**. In other words, if you bring it up by condemning people who have been divorced who have asked the Lord for forgiveness, you become the devil's advocate, and a bearer of false information. This is what Jesus has to say:

Matthew 12:36 But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, **they will give account of it in the day of judgment.**

Many church members treat or make divorced couples feel that they have committed the unpardonable sin. As a result two thirds of the children of divorced couples leave the church as soon as possible. Many times they leave because **they were offended by the words and actions of some of the church members**. It is quite possible that many of the people who feel that they were driven away, will never return to a church again. These "pious" church members will not like the way the Lord will judge them as seen in the following verse:

Matthew 18:6 But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

2

THE NATURE OF LOVE

The word "love" has many meanings to different people. Sometimes it is used as "to like", an example is "I love oranges." It may have a different meaning to a person who is looking at a great piece of art. When the person says "I love that," he is really meaning that he appreciates what the artist has accomplished. When a teacher says, "I love teaching this class," she is meaning that she enjoys teaching the class. Does the word "love" have the same meaning as used in the above illustrations, when a man tells his wife that he loves her? In this last example the word "love" has a far greater meaning than the others.

Colossians 3:14 But above all these things **PUT ON LOVE, which is the bond of perfection.**

Real ministry is meeting the needs of others with love, and the Holy Spirit wants you to put on the bond of perfection. Doing things for the Lord without this bond of perfection, is like trying to drive up a steep hill with your emergency brake half on, because the engine has to exert a lot more energy.

There are a number of characteristics of the word "love" some of which are seen in the following paragraphs:

If I give everything I own to the poor and even go to the stake to be burned

as a martyr, but I don't have love, I've gotten nowhere. So, no matter what I say, what I believe, and what I do, I'm bankrupt without love. - The Message.

LOVE IS PATIENT

1 Corinthians 13:4 Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up.

Most of the time one of the reasons couples marry is because of compatibility. The differences between each are minimized, and the things that are similar are emphasized. When problems develop the differences become more conspicuous. During these times the "patient" part of love needs to be developed in a greater way.

The same is true with our contacts with others at our Church, work, or social activities. What are some of the differences that can cause a problem when we least expect it?

1. Educational differences
2. Racial backgrounds
3. Different intelligence levels
4. Social differences
5. Opposite backgrounds.

Human nature frequently wants to draw attention to itself and sometimes in an inconspicuous way show the differences in the above list. It now becomes necessary to allow the love of the Lord to flow through us to show that in the eyes of the Lord, there is really no difference between us. We were made differently, and we are to work together as a well oiled machine.

Galatians 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

There will be times when we are dealing with people who seem to be slow to catch on or understand. On occasion if this seems to be the problem, we need to ask the Lord to allow His love to flow through us in a greater way. It will be necessary to develop patience that will make allowances for the differences in others. It may also be necessary to ask the Lord to show us what to do to solve the problem.

LOVE IS VERY KIND

2 Samuel 9:1 Now David said, "Is there still anyone who is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake? **2.** And there was a servant of the house of Saul whose name was Ziba. So when they had called him to David, the king said to him, "Are you Ziba?" And he said, "At your service!" **3.** Then the king said, "Is there not still someone of the house of Saul, to whom I may show the kindness of God?" And Ziba said to the king, "There is still a son of Jonathan who is lame in his feet."

Regardless of how Saul mistreated David, or how many times Saul tried to kill him, David wanted to show his kindness to Saul's relatives for Jonathan's sake. God is expecting us to show kindness to His children, **for Jesus' sake.** There may be times when we seem to think this is very difficult to do, but then we should look at Jesus on the cross. His statement was: "Father forgive them for they know not what they do." On occasion it might be necessary to say, **"Lord cause Your love to shine through me so that I will be kind to this person."** On one occasion in a town where a person had to place a phone call through a local switch board, a pastor had to try four times to reach the person he wanted to speak to. The first three times the operator connected him to the wrong person. The fourth time he sweetly asked her to give him the right number, as he had received the wrong number three times. After the operator had made the right connection, she asked the operator next to her, to tell her the name of the person placing the call. She was told that it was the pastor of the local church. The operator decided she would go to his church, because most people would have become angry if they had been given the wrong number three times.

LOVE KNOWS NO JEALOUSY

Jealousy was started by Satan, who became jealous of WHO God is, and wanted to take His place. When you allow jealousy to control you, you are imitating your arch enemy instead of demonstrating the love of God. Jealousy can crop up, or disguise itself in many ways. One person may be asked to sing a solo, but another isn't. This sometimes causes jealousy to rear it's ugly head. Sometimes dropping subtle hints about what one can do, when another person has been chosen, could be an indication of it. When this starts to take place we need to pray David's prayer as seen in the following verse:

Psalm 139:23 Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my

anxieties; **24.** And see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

LOVE MAKES NO PARADE

We may forget about things we've accomplished, but some will make it a point to tell you about what they've done. Many have dropped hints about their capabilities hoping this will open doors for new friendships, or business. Sometimes this has been done at the expense of others. John the Baptist had this to say, which is the opposite of what the carnal nature wants to do:

John 3:30 "He must increase, but I must decrease."

Once the wife of a pastor, who had just become the pastor of the Church, sat in one of the seats in the audience. A lady came to her and told her to move from that seat, because she always sat there. The pastor's wife quickly apologized and moved to another seat. A little later in the service the pastor's wife was introduced, which made the person she had apologized to, embarrassed for being unkind to her.

LOVE IS NEVER RUDE

1 Corinthians 13:5 Does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil.

Rudeness should have no place in your life if you want to reflect the nature and characteristics of Jesus. There may be times when things you say or do, are misjudged and cause people to think you are rude. An example could be when you are returning the telephone to its place, and it slips out of your hand and makes a loud sound. The other person may feel that you were rude to them. Quick apologies are in order.

LOVE IS NEVER SELFISH

The happiest people in the world are the ones who are the most unselfish. God demonstrated His love for us by giving us His Son. He did not hold back His best, and say "I'll send an angel to see if that will solve the problem."

Romans 8:32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

Hebrews 12:2 Looking unto Jesus, **the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross,** despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

The lack of selfishness was demonstrated on both sides. God gave His Son, but there had to be cooperation on the part of Jesus. He had to be unselfish as well, to willingly give His life. He was looking at the end result, or the prize He would receive, which caused Him to be willing. He wanted to have fellowship with, and love from mankind, so He was willing to pay the penalty for our sins. Our unselfishness will not only demonstrate the nature and characteristics of Jesus, but could also be the means of causing some to make a decision for the Lord. **Are we going to be self-centered or Christ-centered?**

There may be times when you may not be very anxious to help someone. Jesus gave you the idea that if you have done something for others, it is as if you have done it for Him, Matthew 25:34-40. Using your words and actions to help others, is doing it as unto the Lord. You can't be a godly blessing to others, unless you know and have an intimate relationship with the Lord.

LOVE IS NOT EASILY PROVOKED

In the Greek, the word "EASILY" is missing. The Spirit of Divine Love which is the Spirit of Christ, will never lead someone to become irritated or provoked. On one occasion Moses lost his temper and struck the rock twice, instead of speaking to it, see Numbers 20:8-12. The penalty was very great for him, he was forbidden to go into the Promised Land. We make a big fuss about sins of the flesh, but overlook the loss of temper, etc. 99% of the time our "Righteous indignation" is just a demonstration of our carnal nature.

Luke 9:52 And sent messengers before His face. And as they went, they entered a village of the Samaritans, to prepare for Him. **53.** But they did not receive Him, because His face was set for the journey to Jerusalem. **54.** And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?" **55.** But He turned and rebuked them, and said, "You do not know what manner of spirit you are of."

When the disciples were not allowed to obtain sleeping arrangements for Jesus and His disciples in the Samaritan village, they felt justified in calling fire down from Heaven. Fortunately they asked the Lord what His will was. Notice their faith was never brought into question, the problem was they were allowing the carnal nature to take control.

LOVE IS NOT MINDFUL OF WRONGS

1 Corinthians 13:6 Doesn't keep score of the sins of others - The Message.

Forgiveness must be complete and is always necessary. When a person claims that he will forgive someone, but states that he wants nothing to do with the other person after that, he is showing the world that he is a **miserable hypocrite**. Our attitude must be "I have been forgiven by the Lord, must I not forgive?"

Matthew 6:14 For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. **15.** But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

People have stated that they could not forgive the wrong that was done to them. The question should be "Are they willing to forgive?" When we become willing to forgive the other person, we will find that the Lord enables us to forgive.

LOVE IS NEVER GLAD WHEN OTHERS GO WRONG

1 Corinthians 13:6 Does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth.

We need to remember that love is gladdened by goodness, not the downfalls of others. Some people take strange delight in the downfall of others. They like to say: "I told you so," or "It serves them right," or "I knew they were heading for trouble." Jeremiah was called the "Weeping Prophet" because of the tremendous concern for his people. Jesus wept over Jerusalem, because they were missing the biggest opportunity of their lives, and were heading for destruction.

Jonah was showing a spirit of selfishness when he became angry because Nineveh repented. He wanted salvation to only be available for the Jews, and was sorry judgment was not going to be poured out on the City of Nineveh. God is not willing that any should be lost, and wants us to have the same type of love.

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, **not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.**

LOVE IS EAGER TO BELIEVE THE BEST

1 Corinthians 13:7 Bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love is slow to expose wrongdoing, and is always eager to believe the best. Be careful to speak what builds up instead of criticizing the person.

Ephesians 4:29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. - N.I.V.

On one occasion I was working with a group of people, and was told that the leader had had an affair with the secretary, which lasted for six months. My immediate response was: "I choose not to believe it." The leader later told me that the statement was true, but had asked the Lord to forgive him. What happened to his sin after he asked the Lord to forgive him? We need to realize that God does not hold it against him anymore, and we need to do the same.

Psalm 103:3 **Who forgives all your iniquities**, Who heals all your diseases, **12.** As far as the east is from the west, **so far has He removed our transgressions from us.**

Isaiah 43:25 **"I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; and I will not remember your sins."**

Isaiah 44:22 I have blotted out, like a thick cloud, your transgressions, and like a cloud, your sins. Return to Me, for I have redeemed you.

Hebrews 10:17 Then He adds, "Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."

Some people seem to think they have the ministry of criticism and condemnation. They may not remember that Miriam got leprosy when she got a critical spirit, see Numbers 12:9-11. Criticizing is what the satanic forces do best, because Satan is called the accuser of the Brethren.

Revelation 12:10 Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down."

People who fall into this trap like to dig up past sins and expose the faults of others. They fail to realize that they will reap what they have sown. How should we respond when a problem really exists? One example could be to say: "He got into the wrong company but is not really a bad boy at heart. Let's pray that the Lord will cause a change of heart and nature to take place."

THE IMMORTALITY OF LOVE

LOVE NEVER FAILS

1 Corinthians 13:8 Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away.

Love cares more for others than for self. - The Message.

Love was never meant to fail or terminate. Prophecies will no longer be needed when the things prophesied about come to pass. The gift of tongues will cease because this was designed for an earthly ministry, and will no longer be necessary when we get to Heaven.

Earthly knowledge will vanish away. Most text books have to be revised within ten years, however some have been changed within three months to two years, because so many changes are being made. All earthly knowledge will no longer be necessary when we get to Heaven. Love will still be in operation in Heaven, but earthly wisdom, knowledge and languages will be outmoded.

THE SUPREMACY OF LOVE

1 Corinthians 13:13 And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

Many people exalt the gifts of the Holy Spirit to a place of extreme importance. These gifts are good in themselves, but in reality are comparatively transitory. These gifts were given to be used of this life, whereas love will last forever.

1. Faith will be turned into sight.

2. Hope - in the expectation of future good, will see the fulfillment of what it is placed in.
3. Love - when coming from God, will last forever.

Human faith and hope primarily concern mankind, whereas love belongs to the very nature of God. It is the love of God that inspires faith.

1 John 4:8 He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

HOW TO HAVE LOVE

No person becomes a saint in his sleep, or slides by chance into spirituality. Regular practice and diligent exercise will always be necessary. Spiritual growth will take place in direct proportion to the amount of time spent in prayer, studying one's Bible and demonstrating the fruits of the Spirit.

Growing in love is going to take effort if it is going to be lasting. True love will become **a reaction rather than an action**. The actions will prove that true love exists.

1 John 4:19 We love Him because He first loved us.

Romans 5:5 Now hope does not disappoint, because **THE LOVE OF GOD HAS BEEN POURED OUT IN OUR HEARTS BY THE HOLY SPIRIT who was given to us.**

Notice what the previous verse is stating:

"THE LOVE OF GOD HAS BEEN POURED OUT IN OUR HEARTS BY THE HOLY SPIRIT who was given to us."

The person who needs to increase the amount of divine love in himself, needs to see where it is coming from. The more you get acquainted with the Lord, the Holy Spirit and with your Bible, the more you will see divine love become a part of your life.

Love is a characteristic which does not think of receiving, only of giving. You are not totally walking in love until you have gotten away from self-seeking ambitions and desires. Your experiences with love should broaden as life goes on. A girl starts out in life by loving her parents. Later she meets a man and falls in love with him. She still loves her parents, but is willing to go to the ends of the earth if necessary, to be with the man she is marrying.

Later on she may have a baby whom she dearly loves. She still loves her parents as well as her husband. What is happening? Her love becomes broader, and each new experience causes love to grow.

Christ came into this world to reveal the nature of God the Father to mankind. The closer you get to Jesus, the more of His nature of love will become part of you.

3

MAKING A MARRIAGE SUCCESSFUL

PERSONAL APPEARANCE

Attractiveness is very important to win the attention of your mate. After the wedding it is vitally important to maintain personal attractiveness if you are interested in having a happy marriage. Often people become very lazy concerning personal hygiene after marriage, because their attitude has become, "You're stuck with me the way I am." This can cause many problems in the home, and will later be visible to others as well. It is not only necessary to maintain a good outward appearance, but one must have beauty of mind and spirit as well.

An old saying states that cleanliness is next to godliness. God told Samuel in 1 Samuel 16:7 that, "Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." The people of the world will judge you by your personal appearance, or the way you keep your home. There have been times when some have said a lot about their relationship with the Lord, but frequently wear unclean clothing or have unpleasant living conditions. Careless or lazy personal hygiene, or work habits are a poor testimony for the Lord. **Frequently this might come from a poor list of priorities or very self-centeredness.** Problems often increase if a person would rather watch television or talk to friends, instead of attending to home responsibilities. Once a small girl was told to clean her closet. An hour later her mother

asked her why she had not started yet, and her response was, "Those were not my thoughts." Ask the Lord to help you overcome this weakness, if this is a problem.

Sometimes there seems to be a double standard, when a pleasant voice is used on the telephone or when there is company, but a rough voice is evident when they are speaking to their mate. Angry outbursts of temper will usually produce angry responses, and it will only lead to problems later. Courtesy to each other is another area where we need to be on guard. We can be very courteous to others, but treat our mate with disrespect. Others may judge your relationship with the Lord by the way you treat your spouse. Always remember that you reap what you sow. You need to sow loving and kind words, if you want the same response. Others may judge your relationship with the Lord by the way you treat your spouse.

Stress can cause mood swings and when these become too high, it will frequently cause anger to flare. Frequently it is targeted at family members, because they feel they can get away with it. In reality this is temper under control, because normally if a similar situation developed in front of outsiders, the anger would be held in until later. An example of anger under control is seen when a person has been stopped by a policeman. He will hold his temper in front of the officer, but not control it after he drives away. The family members reap the results of his frustration or loss of temper.

HELPING EACH OTHER

Each one has strong points as well as weak ones. The loving couple will make allowances for the weaker points instead of becoming critical over them. They need to work together, helping the other where it is needed. Remember the strengths of one spouse are frequently the weak ones of the other. The Lord also causes the reverse to be true, which means the strengths of the second, can be the weaknesses of the first. Always concentrate on the virtues instead of the faults. Try to understand how the other person feels. Never make fun of or discredit your spouse in front of others. Emotional stress can come because of thoughtlessness, which can prove to be very irritating. Cultivate the ability to heal little hurts quickly, before they pile up and get out of proportion.

When jealousy arises, it may be a signal of emotional insecurity, or it may be a resentment of some real **or fancied problem**. It may be unfounded, but hard to deal with. Start planting seeds of love by doing things for each other. There will be a response, because the seeds of love will bear fruit. In the event that the problem was not imagined, the offending mate will have to make up his or her mind about losing this new love and affection.

Repentance will be needed, as well as asking the Lord for help to not repeat it.

It is a good idea to budget time so that you can have time together, instead of each going their own way. They could then become like two ships at sea that pass each other in the dark.

SHARING THE LOAD

A number of years ago a hunter took his dogs to go fox hunting, and released the dogs when they spotted a fox. The dogs chased the fox for some time, who finally ran into a hollow log. While the dogs were barking at the end of the log the fox entered, the fox emerged out of the other end and ran away. The dogs quickly chased after the fox again, but found they could not catch him. A little later the fox headed back to the log and repeated what it had done the previous time. After the fox did this the third time, the hunter saw that his dogs were becoming very tired, but the fox seemed to be completely rested by crawling through the log. He went to examine the log to see what was really happening, and in it he saw the mate of the one who was being chased. The two foxes were taking turns; the one was resting, while the other was running away from the dogs. They could have kept this up all day, but the dogs were in no condition to pursue the foxes any longer. We can learn from this fox family, if we are willing to work together. Teamwork is very important if you are desirous of overcoming obstacles. On occasion there may seem to be nothing the one can do to help the other, but in reality there are always at least two things you can do. The first is to be an encourager to the mate; the second is to spend time in prayer, expecting the Lord to undertake in the situation.

Many a family has had serious problems because of not sharing the load in the home. A husband may come home after work and do as little as possible. He is expecting his wife to take care of everything in the house - because "he worked hard all day." If the wife is working outside the home as well, he needs to realize that **he has to share in the responsibilities of the home in a greater way.**

Working together in the home will give a great opportunity to develop unity, as well as strengthen the family. Sometimes one or the other holds back because this is what they experienced in their childhood. The couple must realize that bad habits or sometimes laziness of one of the parents does not need to be repeated in their home. They are starting a new home, and they must work together to make their family the most caring family in the world.

4

FINANCES

OVERCOMING MONEY PROBLEMS

Couples need to be resourceful in marriage if they want to see living at its best. There will be times when things may be in short supply, and this can cause problems for the couple who is not resourceful. They must rely on each other's strengths instead of pointing out and emphasizing weaknesses or shortcomings. Living in an atmosphere of love, enables a couple to find their most fulfilling happiness together despite any problems they may face. Couples who build up their marriage, build up their happiness.

Many times money becomes a key factor in causing problems in the marriage. You may have no control over some of the problems that arise. Examples of this could be an unexpected lay-off at work, an unexpected pregnancy when there is no insurance to meet the expenses, or a spending spree. It's important to get to the root of the problem. Careful planning is needed before problems come.

A PLAN FOR SPENDING

A problem that has affected many new couples, is when they look at what

their parents or friends have. They then get into debt very quickly in an effort to impress others, which becomes a fast road to trouble. It is very possible to have true happiness and not have many material things, because lack is not the greatest hardship. Having everything that the neighbors have, can sometimes lead to very serious emotional problems. Paul gave us some sound advice in the following verses:

1 Timothy 6:9 But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. **10.** For the love of money **is a root of all kinds of evil**, for which some **have strayed from the faith in their greediness**, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

1 Timothy 6:9 People who want to be rich fall into all sorts of temptations and traps. They are caught by foolish and harmful desires that drag them down and destroy them. **10.** The love of money causes all kinds of trouble. Some people want money so much that they have given up their faith and caused themselves a lot of pain. - Contemporary English Version.

PREPARING A BUDGET

Teamwork is very important in the preparation of a budget. Since marriage is a partnership, both partners must be considered. The couple must not have the idea that they are competing with each other. They are to work together as a unit. Before they were married they did not have to answer to others concerning their spending. An attitude **that will not work** is where one spouse thinks that the money he has is **his** money, but the money that the mate has, belongs to the family. One must get away from the "I-minded" way of thinking, and think in terms of "We-minded," or "Ours." When the budget permits, a certain amount of money should be set aside for each, so that they may buy things without having to give an account as to how they spent it.

It is not necessary to buy new items when the couple is on a limited budget. Many second hand stores or places where they sell items that are marked down because of a small imperfection have been a big blessing to many couples. Often stores reduce prices to make room for more merchandise, and the wise couple can look for these sales. Get into the habit of asking the question: "Do we really need this?" and "If we get this now, will we have to do without something that we will need more a little later?"

After comparing the income to their expenses, many couples find that they

are invariably short every month. This is not the plan of the Lord for their lives, so something needs to change. Ask the Lord to give the wisdom needed to overcome the problem.

James 1:5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

An ideal plan will be to ask the Lord to enable you to live within 60% of your income, instead of 110% the way some people are living. This later type of lifestyle is causing them to go deeper into debt on a daily basis. Why do we say live on only 60% of your income? The first 10% belongs to the Lord. Don't expect Him to bless you if you are not paying your tithes.

The second 10% should be used to plant seed into the kingdom of God, such as other ministries. He wants to bless you, but He will only **give you a harvest based on what you are planting in excess of your tithes.** When you plant nothing, you will not reap a harvest. Expect the day to come when the harvest is coming in on a continual basis, from the many times you have planted, to cover **all** your expenses. The income from your work can now be used for extending the kingdom of God.

The third 10% is to be used for emergencies and vacations. Careful planning will enable you to have enough for emergencies, and still have wonderful vacations. Start expecting the Lord to bless you so that you will be able to increase this section in a big way, and **you will be able to help many others in their time of emergency.**

The fourth 10% is to be used for secular types of savings and retirement plans. Remember you are planting seed into these programs, **so don't eat it.**

You may not be able to start with the ideal budget, but start where you are - then aim for the ideal. Ask the Lord to direct you as you start to prepare your budget; then expect Him to help you live within it. You will be surprised at the bargains He sends your way, which allows you to have money left over when you get your next paycheck. You may say, "But I am on a fixed income - which is less than what my expenses are." Go back to the second line of this paragraph which states: "Ask the Lord to direct you as you start to prepare the budget, then expect Him to help you live within it." Are you expecting Him to help you, or are you going **to continue to use your faith to believe that the enemy will stop God from helping you?**

GOD WANTS TO

MEET YOUR NEEDS!

Many Christians have been responsible for building the obstacles that stopped their prayers from being answered. They did not believe or completely depend on God's Word. They became controlled by the circumstances around them, instead of depending on the promises of God.

In Psalm 24:1 you read the following words: "The earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell there in." What does this mean? The answer is: You do not own the land you live on, because it belongs to God.

You are "renting" the field, which is the earth. This "rent" is given in the form of "tithes". It is not only given for the use of the world you live in, but also for reaping all the benefits God has for you including health and protection. The tithe or "rent" is not to be used to meet your expenses. God expects you to start planting seed - over and above the "rent" **IF you want to receive a harvest.**

Many people see blessings, but are not tithing, and think that God is blessing them. God causes the sun to rise on the good and the evil and sends rain on the just and the unjust, Matthew 5:45. Some people confuse God's approval with His blessings, not understanding that their hard work will produce a harvest.

Many people are **ACTING LIKE "SQUATTERS."** The meaning for this word in a dictionary is: "A person who settles on another's land without right." This is how many people are treating the Lord. They are not paying the "rent" for all of His blessings, then they wonder why they have problems in life. God starts to remove His protection from them, because they are acting like the servants in the parable who were called wicked servants, see Matthew 25:14-30.

GOD WANTS TO STOP THINGS THAT WASTE YOUR POSSESSIONS

After reading Malachi 3:7-10, many **have felt that they had to perform a duty**, and so gave money to the church because **they felt that it was an obligation**. The One who is **really obligated is God. He obligates himself** to giving you a harvest, meeting your needs as well **as stopping the things that destroy your possessions**. When you see that **giving to**

the Lord is a PRIVILEGE, because of the benefits, you will become a cheerful giver.

God gave us a pattern. Jesus started by giving us the world we live in. He gave us life, as well as everything around us. God showed His love to us in the greatest possible way, by **GIVING us His Son.**

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

God's method was to **GIVE FIRST** and **THEN TO RECEIVE.** He showed His love to us FIRST and then we were to give our love to Him. In order to receive blessings from God, **we must FIRST GIVE.** The satanic forces have bound many Christians with a **spirit of poverty.** They do not seem to really expect that God will meet their needs. This is because they copied the world which teaches, "In order to get, I HAVE TO TAKE." Their attitude seems to be, "I must grab as much as I can before the others get to it". This is the exact opposite of what Jesus teaches.

Luke 6:38 **GIVE, and it will be given to you:** good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the **same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.**

A lady came to her pastor and asked him why she was always helping people as well as helping around the church, but was continually having a financial need. The pastor asked her: "Do people help you?" She immediately replied "Yes." He asked her if people smiled at her when she smiled at them. She immediately replied yes. The pastor's reply was: "You are reaping what you are sowing. You do good things for others and you are reaping the same kind of harvest. When you smile at someone, they smile back." He told her to start planting financially, and she would see a different type of harvest.

STOPPING YOUR HARVEST

Many Christians have planted seed in the past. They expected to get a harvest from the seed they had planted as well as the additional seed they were going to plant. Problems arose which caused them to stop planting. This may have been in the form of unemployment, illness, an accident with the car, or something else. They then felt that they could not continue to tithe or plant additional seed. They stopped their giving, which stopped the harvest from coming.

The moment you stop paying your tithes you immediately **step out of the protection of the Lord**. You have just stepped into the hand of Satan, which allows him to start a bigger attack against you.

The problems you face could be called lean times, or going through a time of drought. You need to pay attention to what Isaac did, see Genesis 26:1 - 3, 12 - 14. He was directed by the Lord **to plant during the lean times**. Frequently Christians look to their own resources, which stops them from giving to God. God expects you to look to Him, who wants to supply your needs according to **His resources**.

The person who thinks that he can't afford to pay his tithes, or plant any seed above his tithes is using his faith in the wrong direction. **He is believing that Satan will stop God from meeting his needs**. Since when is Satan capable of stopping God from blessing you? The devil **can only do that when you allow him**. You must change your thinking to match what God's Word says.

Philippians 4:19 And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

Is there a condition for the above verse? The condition is seen in Philippians 4:10 - 18. These people gave first and amply supplied the apostle's need. Since they **GAVE FIRST, or planted seed into his ministry**, God supplied their needs. The key is **GIVING FIRST, or PLANTING FIRST**, and then **you will receive the harvest**.

Generosity should start with your poverty, so that when you are well off you will have developed the habit of giving. When you are generous with your whole life, you will be generous with your giving. When you are stingy with your whole life, you will be reluctant to give as well. Many people have said that they could not afford to pay their tithes now, but in the meantime they are **only "tipping" the Lord** and become stingy people. They say that when they get a lot of money they will give large amounts to the church. They are only fooling themselves if they think they will change when they get rich. Jesus shows you in the following verses that they will not change:

Luke 16:10 He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much. **11**. Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?

Luke 16:10-11 If you're honest in small things, you'll be honest in big things; if you're a crook in small things, you'll be a crook in big things. If

you're not honest in small jobs, who will put in charge of the store? - The Message.

SEED MINDED INSTEAD OF NEED MINDED

God wants to meet all of your needs, but **He wants you to become SEED MINDED instead of NEED MINDED.** He wants you to plant into God honoring ministries, with the idea of Him **giving you a harvest from what you planted to meet your needs.**

Remember tithing is something you owe and it is not planting seed, which means you can receive a harvest from the seed that is planted, but not from the tithes.

2 Corinthians 9:6 But this I say: He who **SOWS SPARINGLY** will also **REAP SPARINGLY**, and he who **SOWS BOUNTIFULLY** will also **REAP BOUNTIFULLY.**

If you were to go to the grocery store and try to buy two week's supply of groceries for a family of six, with only twenty dollars, would this be buying **sparingly or bountifully?** You would think that this would be very sparingly. If twenty dollars **is considered sparingly** at the grocery store, why do people **think** that they **are sowing bountifully** if they give twenty dollars in a church offering? It is still the same amount of money. In the eyes of God, it would be considered planting bountifully **IF** that was almost all you had **and you had been faithful in tithing.**

2 Corinthians 9:7 So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; **for God loves A CHEERFUL GIVER. 8.** And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, **always having all sufficiency** in all things, **have an abundance for EVERY good work.**

God is telling you He wants to meet **all your needs**, but you are to **plant first.** If you plant nothing you will reap nothing. When you **plant BOUNTIFULLY, in excess of your tithes, He gives you a BOUNTIFUL HARVEST.** What type of planting is this Scripture referring to? Is it money? Many poor people don't have money so they would be excluded from this promise if it meant **ONLY** money. Matthew 10:42 points out that even a cup of water will not lose its reward.

A couple had two sons attending High School and they were asked if they were setting money aside for a college education for the boys. The answer

was, "No," because they were putting the extra money in a missionary offering every month. They were told that they were foolish because the boys would not be able to go to college. God honored their faith because they were planting seed and **expecting God to give the harvest for the boys' education**. On the night of their graduations, both boys were called to the platform and given full scholarships for college.

Many people have said that they did not have anything to give. Philippians 4:19 shows that God will supply your need. If the need is seed, will God supply it? Most of the time He will **NOT, because He only supplies seed to SOWERS**. Research has shown that only 18% to 28% of the people of most churches are sowers. Often Christians feel that they are too poor, or have nothing to plant. When they **become willing to be sowers** and start to plant what little they have, they will find that God will fulfill the following verse in their lives:

2 Corinthians 9:10 Now may He who **supplies SEED TO THE SOWER**, and bread for food, **SUPPLY AND MULTIPLY** the seed **YOU HAVE SOWN** and **increase the fruits of your righteousness**.

When you give to God, **according TO HIS WILL**, He does two things:

1. He gives a harvest.
2. He returns the seed at the time of the harvest.

Many Christians are **NOT GIVEN SEED** because they are **"TIPPERS" and NOT "SOWERS."** A tip is given in a restaurant, etc., to the person who provides a service, but the tip does not pay for the food.

God wants you to plant **NOT JUST ONCE, but many times**. He returns the seed to you **at the time of harvest** so this **can be used over again**. God wants this to be **A CONTINUOUS CYCLE**. Giving to the Lord **becomes a PRIVILEGE** instead of a **responsibility**. God wants to work in your life, using your talents, your abilities and your resources.

USING YOUR ENERGY WISELY

On one occasion I started on a trip into Mexico and in the first 12 miles I used a quarter of a tank of gasoline. When we started to look for the problem we found five holes in the fuel line. After we replaced the line, the problem was stopped. I could have believed God to continue to give me the money to replace the gas, but this was not the will of God. He wanted me to look for the problem and then make the necessary corrections before I went

any further. Realize that many times corrections must be made in your own life, before you will see God give you help or miracles to overcome the problems you are facing.

Many couples are very efficient in various areas of their lives, but seem to be completely unable to take control of time. There are many people who are constantly late for their appointments or church services. They do not seem to be able to plan ahead or budget their time. This will frequently lead to frustration on the part of the other spouse. Corrections need to be made if they want to have a happy and lasting marriage. On many occasions poor planning will cause a lack of good stewardship with money God has entrusted to us. A question could be asked is, "If God can't trust you with your time, why should He trust you by giving extra money?"

My wife and I do a lot of traveling for speaking engagements in various countries. On several occasions we will see someone go to the store for two or three items. A little while later they will go back to the store for something else. Later on during the day they will go to the post office for their mail, and return to the store once more. All of these extra trips take time and cost money for the gasoline, as well as wear and tear on the car. Planning ahead will enable the couple to make one trip, or possibly a second, because of the children's school activities. This will cut down on how tired they are at the end of the day, as well as added frustration.

5

OVERCOMING DIFFICULTIES

PROBLEMS WILL ARISE

In James 1:2-4 you see the steps to real growth. The first one is to **be happy** when you have problems. Many people become very unhappy or possibly lose their temper, and then can't think clearly to solve the problem. The second thing you see is that **problems produce PATIENCE**. You find that the immature person is not a patient person, because **patience produces MATURITY**. The third thing James shows you is that you **now BECOME COMPLETE**. The last thing you see is that **you LACK NOTHING**. Why is this possible? You are now a mature individual and are expecting God to honor His Word and meet the need, as seen in the following verse:

Philippians 4:19 And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

Sometimes the difficulty is easy to solve. On one occasion a grandfather was taking a nap. His small grandson came in and put some Limburger cheese on his mustache. When he woke up he immediately said that something smelled bad in the room. He went into the kitchen where his daughter was baking some cookies. He then said, "Something smells bad in here." Then he went outside to get some fresh air, and declared, "The

whole world stinks." As soon as he washed his face he found that the smell was gone.

Once a lady was asked if she had ever been lonely, and said that she was lonely every night when she went to bed. Her husband was very surprised to hear this because they slept in the same bed. He asked her why she felt that way. Her response was that every night when they got into bed, he turned his back to her when they went to sleep. He looked at her in surprise and explained, "Didn't you know that when I was in High School, I fell and broke three ribs? I always have a lot of pain when I lay on that side, so I lay on the other side." The solution to this problem was very easy; they changed sides in bed. If you are having some difficulty with your spouse, ask the Lord to help you find a solution to the problem.

Once I had misplaced something and my wife asked me what I had been doing when I last had it. I thought of the different things I had done during the last hour and where I had been; then I looked down and found that I was standing about three feet from where I had left it. When a problem occurs and you don't see an immediate answer, try to think of what you were doing, **that was working, before the problem started.**

Don't give up if you still do not have the answer. Start expecting God to give you divine wisdom to overcome the problem, as seen in the following verse:

James 1:5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

Marriage is sometimes entered into as if a person is entering a dream world, where they all lived happily ever after. This is not true in the real world. Every couple is going to run into trouble, see Job 14:1; Acts 14:22; 2 Timothy 3:12; Hebrews 10:32 and 1 Peter 4:12. In the beginning each one has complete respect for the other. If this respect becomes damaged in any degree, it will become necessary to repair the damage as soon as possible. If this is not accomplished, the love between each other will suffer and diminish.

A goat farmer in Texas was once told to build the best fence that money could buy, and then back off from the fence with a five gallon bucket of water. He was to throw the water at the fence, and if the fence won't hold the water, it won't hold the goats. If a goat wants to get out of the pasture he can find a way, but if it is content and has plenty to eat, it won't look for a way to escape.

Goats can be very clever escape artists. This goat owner once had a billy

goat named "Boots," that stood four feet tall at the shoulders. He was long legged and long bodied and if he wanted to, he could jump an eight foot fence. The farmer decided to put him in a very high corral with the top of the fence close to eight feet high. After he would put him in the corral, he would drive about half a mile to the front gate of the pasture, but when he got to the gate old "Boots" would be waiting for him. He would catch him again (he was fairly gentle for such a big goat) and take him back to the corral and shut the gate. Again when he reached the front gate there was Boots. The third time he put Boots in the corral, he drove very slowly and watched him in his rear view mirror. Old Boots would run to the corner of the corral from an angle, and jumping at the corner of the corral about halfway up, then pushing off with his hind feet and leaping the remaining four feet over the fence. The farmer couldn't believe his eyes. The goat could clear this fence in about three seconds.

Rather than keep him in the corral the farmer gathered up some beautiful female goats for him, and put them in the pasture at the back of the ranch. With good grazing and beautiful girls he never had a problem again with Boots escaping. Sometimes it takes more than a fence to keep a goat at home.

Is your mate content to be with you? Sometimes a mate seems to be spending more time away from home, when it's not necessary. Don't jump to conclusions, the mate may have a good reason, such as preparing a surprise for later. If this does not seem to be the case, start overcoming the problem by looking at the good points in your mate and give complements. Show your appreciation rather than frequently criticize. None of us are perfect, so **try to improve the relationship BY YOUR OWN EXAMPLE.** Paul gave us some good advice in the following verse:

Philippians 4:8 Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy; meditate on these things.

Often you hear the statement, "We're just incompatible." They are trying to leave you with the impression that they have a hopeless situation. This often reflects a person who **is selfish and is unwilling to make any changes, and does not want to look for an answer.** Most of the time the problem can be corrected by finding the misunderstandings and the things that bother their mate. As they start to grow in patience and try to overcome the self-centeredness, the situations will take care of themselves.

Now is the time to create mutual trust. The husband must help the wife meet the highest goals in her life, and the wife must do the same thing for her husband. When you take into account the major and minor goals of

each, the selfish nature starts to be removed.

TREATING THE SPOUSE AS AN EQUAL

In some homes the husband rules the house with a very strong will, and the wife has to give an account for almost every penny she spends. She is afraid to make any decisions, lest her husband lose his temper. The rest of the family feels that they have to walk very carefully, because they seem to be walking on eggs. This attitude is not of God, and the man will find that later God will deal **VERY harshly with him**, unless repentance and a change of life takes place. On many occasions the children are waiting until the time comes when they can leave home, and sometimes have no intention of returning.

God created Eve **TO BE A HELPMATE** to Adam, and not to be his slave. A lot more could be accomplished if they worked together, instead of having a boss - slave attitude. The man in this type of situation is doing his family a great injustice. What will happen to the wife if he first passes away? Because she was forced to be so dependent on him when they were together, she will find that it will be extremely hard to make decisions.

In some homes the wife rules the house with a very strong will. The husband finds that the rolls have been reversed. Frequently he is not consulted when decisions are made and if he makes an issue of it, he may be threatened with a divorce, which God hates, see Malachi 2:16. None of these actions please the Lord, and the wife may find that she will **eventually have an extremely bitter harvest**. She may also find that her children will turn against her and possibly later mistreat her. Remember power struggles from either side will lead to a power drain for both.

On one occasion an elderly man with Parkinson's Disease came to live with his son and daughter-in-law. At first she allowed him to eat with them in the dining room; later as the disease progressed, she commanded him to eat in the kitchen. One day he was shaking so badly, he caused his plate of food to fall on the floor and break. She became angry and started feeding him from a wooden bowl. She told him that since he ate like a pig, she would feed him in something like a trough. One evening she saw her small son carving a piece of wood with his pocket knife. She asked him what he was making. He told her that he was making a trough for the time she got old. Her son's statement convicted her, so she went to her father-in-law, asked for his forgiveness and told him that from then on he would eat with them in the dining room. She did not want to have a bitter harvest for her

actions.

As helpmates, both are to work together with love and respect. Decisions concerning the children should be discussed together, so that the children can't play one parent against the other.

Does the tail wag the dog, or is the dog supposed to wag its tail? This sounds like a foolish question, but many times we see children running the family, instead of the parents being in control. The plan of God is for the parents to be in control, instead of having the child make a big fuss every time he or she doesn't get his or her own way. Paul shows God's plan for children in the following verses:

Ephesians 6:1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. **2.** "Honor your father and mother," **which is the first commandment with promise: 3.** "that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth."

Violence among children and young people is on the increase in every country, because the children did not have boundaries set for them when they were small. As they became older they became very angry when they didn't get their own way. On one occasion there was a small mechanical horse outside a grocery store in a shopping mall. A small boy made a big fuss when his mother would not put the money in for him to get a ride. Next to the horse was a psychologist's office, so she went in to ask him if there was anything he could do. The doctor told her that he was asked this same question about three times a week. He went out and said something into the child's ear. The child immediately stopped his yelling and quietly went with his mother to get into the car. On the way home the mother asked him what the doctor had said. He told his mother that the doctor would give him the worst licking he ever had in his life, if he did not stop his yelling. It is necessary for parents to set boundaries for their children, but punishment must be in line with the offence and the age of the child. Remember, God also has limits for us and will hold us accountable for our inappropriate actions.

Ephesians 6:4 And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.

At one time my wife and I had a group foster home, with fifteen teenagers living with us, as well as our own children. These teenagers had learned to con a lot of people. It was not surprising that they would go to one of us to ask permission for something. If they didn't get a favorable answer, go to the other one. We invariably would ask them what the other one said. After they told us, our response would be, "In that case, my answer is the same."

It is very important to work together, as well as be consistent with children, other-wise they will grow up thinking that with a little effort, **they can always get away with what they want.**

DISAGREEMENTS

Differences of opinion are going to arise in every family. The way you cope with these differences will make a big difference in the outcome of the problem. The attitude of some people is: "I want to work together with you from **MY POINT OF VIEW.**" This type of attitude will quickly bring problems. Good communication now becomes very important between the couple. On many occasions the one person is thinking what they are going to say next, while the other is still talking. The first person is not listening to what the other is saying. During times of big disagreements **EACH SIDE** should listen 60% to 70% of the time, and talk 30% to 40% of the time. The "listening" part is spent, partly in listening and the rest of the time in thinking what the other person said, instead of what they are going to say next. Frequently a person **is expecting too much from the mate and not enough from their own actions.** This should be reversed. Always look at the problem from the mate's point of view, which will cause good solutions to be found easier. The stumbling blocks will now turn into stepping stones.

Disagreements are sometimes caused because the one has misunderstood the words or intentions of the other. Problems will sometimes get blown out of proportion because couples have allowed little grievances to build up. The difficulties should be cleared up as soon as possible before they are magnified and look insurmountable.

It becomes very important that you watch your words when you are having a disagreement with your spouse. The **WAY** you say things, as well as **WHAT** you say can cause a lot of problems in the future. When you do not give honor to your mate, you will find that your prayers will be hindered, see 1 Peter 3:7-12.

1 Peter 3:7 Likewise you husbands, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, **THAT YOUR PRAYERS MAY NOT BE HINDERED.**

WORDS CAN BE
LIKE ARROWS

In Psalm 64:3 David compared words to arrows. Before harsh words are spoken, while they are still in your mind, **they don't hurt anyone.** Once they are released they can cause great damage. After the words are spoken, you can apologize, but you need to realize that tremendous damage may have been done. The arrows (words) leave your mouth and may greatly wound someone. Jesus tells you in the following verse that you will have to give an account for your words. James tells you that you should be slow to speak, which will help you to not wound people with your words:

Matthew 12:36 But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, **they will give account of it in the day of judgment.**

James 1:19 Therefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; **20.** for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

BITTERNESS AND UNFORGIVENESS

Matthew 6:14 For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. **15.** But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Bitterness and an unforgiving spirit usually go together. The satanic forces will use these methods as well as the other things mentioned in Ephesians 4:31, to keep you in bondage, causing you to yield to many other types of temptations.

There will be times when a person thinks that he can't forgive someone who has wronged him. Regardless of what he thinks, God will not forgive him of the things that he has done until he is willing to forgive the other person. No one with unforgiven sins can enter Heaven. Even if a person is able to claim that he has no sin, if he has not forgiven another person who has wronged him, God will not cleanse his past, as seen in Matthew 6:14, 15, and Mark 11:25, 26. When he is willing to forgive the person who has wronged him, then **the Lord will give him the ability to forgive that person.**

Satan uses an unforgiving spirit as a tool to keep many couples from having an effective spiritual life. Their prayer life, as well as the power of God working through them, becomes totally ineffective as long as they maintain this wedge between themselves and the Lord. The one feels that it is

impossible to forgive the person who has offended him. **The question should not be: "Can I forgive the person?, but "Am I WILLING to forgive?"** As soon as you are willing, you can ask the Lord to enable you to forgive and He will give you a **forgiving spirit**. Now, forgiving comes without any conditions.

Forgiving for us does not mean forgetting, although it can lead to forgetting. Forgiving must be a choice on our part not to retaliate. From the human standpoint, forgiving means to not hold the situation **AGAINST THE PERSON ANYMORE**. This will be possible when you allow the Holy Spirit to cause a change to take place in your life.

The word "FORGIVE" means to cease to feel angry or resentful, to no longer hold it against the person.

The word "PARDON" has an additional meaning, which can include a remission or removal of the legal consequences of a crime, conviction, error or offence. Legal consequences may be removed, but natural or physical consequences may still remain.

An illustration could be that in a fit of anger one mate threw something which broke an expensive item in the home, or worse yet, destroyed an eye of one of the family members. Forgiveness may be given, but the effect of the outburst of anger could last the rest of their lives.

Supposing a couple is having a big argument over money, and later the wife goes out and buys \$500 worth of things, but charges it to their credit card. She later realizes she should not have done it, so she asks her husband to forgive her. He is very willing to forgive her, but they still must address **the consequences**. Somehow more money has to come in, not only to get them out of their previous problem, but take care of the new charges as well.

You can ask your mate to forgive you when you have done things that you shouldn't have done, but you will reap what you have sown. **Remember the consequences still must be resolved.**

Three examples are seen in the Bible. In the first case Moses asks the Lord to pardon - or in other words, remove the legal consequences from the people:

Numbers 14:12 "I will strike them with the pestilence and disinherit them, and I will make of you a nation greater and mightier than they." **19.** "Pardon the iniquity of this people, I pray, according to the greatness of Your mercy, just as You have forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now."

20. Then the Lord said: **"I have pardoned, according to your word; 21.** "but truly, as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord; **22.** "because all these men who have seen My glory and the signs which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have put Me to the test now these ten times, and have not heeded My voice, **23.** **"they certainly shall not see the land of which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who rejected Me see it. 24.** "But My servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit in him and has followed Me fully, I will bring into the land where he went, and his descendants shall inherit it."

God had told Moses to step aside so that He could completely destroy the disobedient people who had come out of Egypt. Moses immediately prayed, asking God to pardon them. God said He would pardon them, which meant **the legal consequences would be removed**, and they would not be destroyed at that time. The **physical consequences were not removed**, which meant they would never enter the Promised Land, but their children would grow up to do so.

The second example is when Miriam rebelled against Moses and was very critical of him at Hazeroth. The Lord became angry with her and struck her with leprosy, Numbers 12:9-10. In verse 13 Moses is asking that the Lord will pardon her. The Lord agreed, but she was put out of the camp for a week. During that time the entire nation was not able to leave Hazeroth. What happened after that. According to the requirements for allowing a leper back into the camp the person who had leprosy had to have their head and eye-brows shaved. The legal consequences still had to be satisfied before the nation could move on. Needless to say, Miriam's hair did not grow back over-night, so I can imagine that there was a lot of talking behind her back.

The third example is the time Jesus was on the cross. He asked God the Father to forgive them, but what happened to the consequences? You need to go back to the Sunday before the cross to see the prophecy.

Luke 23:34 Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." And they divided His garments and cast lots.

Luke 19:41 Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, **42.** saying, "If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. **43.** "For the days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, **44.** "and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation."

When Jesus asked the Father to forgive the people, what happened? First of all, He was setting an example for us to hold no grudges against others. Secondly, He was expecting God the Father to do two things.

- 1.** Not hold the immediate actions against them.
- 2.** Remove the legal consequences from them.

If God the Father had not removed the legal consequences, divine judgment could have immediately been poured out on them. On one occasion in the Old Testament, a hole in the ground opened up and two hundred and fifty people were swallowed up in it.

The physical consequences were not removed, as seen in the prophecy of Luke 19:41-44. A few years later the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and tortured a large number of people.

EMOTIONAL UPSETS

Angry behavior is out of place, because things may be said that could be very difficult to overcome. When a person feels that he or she is getting very angry, he or she needs to tell the mate that they need some time to cool down. They need to deal with lack of self-confidence or frustration. Sometimes this takes place because old habits need to change.

There are times when we are bringing a problem that started outside the home, and then taking it out on our mate. A problem may have taken place at work and the husband arrives home, then gets upset with his wife over some small thing. Since most flare-ups in the home are not really serious, couples should look for the root of the problem, correct it, and ask for forgiveness for getting upset over something small. Be slow to anger and quick to forgive and forget, see James 1:19.

6

A SPIRITUAL SPLINT FOR A BROKEN SPIRIT!

A wounded or broken spirit may cause depression, and probably has been experienced by most of us at one time or another. Years may have gone by, but then something will come up to remind us, and cause the old wound to fester once again. This will take place when the person tried to cause the healing to take place under his or her own power, instead of allowing the power of the Holy Spirit to enable a complete healing to take place.

In the physical, if a bone is not set right, it will cause difficulties in the future. It may be necessary to re-break the bone and set it once again, if complete healing is to be expected.

THE SPLINT OF FORGIVENESS

Matthew 6:12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. **14.** For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. **15. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.**

It is very difficult to completely forgive someone who has deeply wronged you, unless you have help from the Lord. The Lord will give you the ability to forgive the person, when you become willing.

Deep wounds are usually felt when you are hurt by someone closest to you.

King David had to flee from Jerusalem when his son Absalom started a rebellion and wanted to take over the kingdom. After he and his followers left Jerusalem, they were met by Shimei, who was a relative of King Saul.

2 Samuel 16:5 Now when King David came to Bahurim, there was a man from the family of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei the son of Gera, coming from there. He came out, cursing continuously as he came. **6.** And he threw stones at David and at all the servants of King David. And all the people and all the mighty men were on his right hand and on his left. **7.** Also Shimei said thus when he cursed: "Come out! Come out! You bloodthirsty man, you rogue! **8.** "The Lord has brought upon you all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose place you have reigned; and the Lord has delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom your son. So now you are caught in your own evil, because you are a bloodthirsty man!"

After the ending of the uprising with Absalom, Shimei was one of the first to welcome David back in Jerusalem. One of David's followers wanted to receive permission to kill Shimei for the way he treated the king, however the king said the man would not be killed at that time. It appears as though David completely forgave Shimei and forgot about the matter after that. What really took place was that David was using his own strength to forgive the man, instead of allowing the strength of the Lord to work through him. When David was dying he called in his son Solomon, who was to be the new king, and gave him instruction concerning Shimei.

1 Kings 2:8 And see, you have with you Shimei the son of Gera, a Benjamite from Bahurim, who cursed me with a malicious curse in the day when I went to Mahanaim. But he came down to meet me at the Jordan, and I swore to him by the Lord, saying, "I will not put you to death with the sword." **9.** Now therefore, do not hold him guiltless, for you are a wise man and know what you ought to do to him; but bring his gray hair down to the grave with blood.

Eight years had passed since Shimei had cursed and thrown rocks at King David and the people with him. When the battle was over, Shimei was one of the first to come to King David to ask for forgiveness, 2 Samuel 19:18-23. David's response was that he was not to be put to death that day, verses 22, 23. He said nothing about forgiveness, just that he would not receive the penalty for what he did that day. Now David gave his instructions to his son Solomon, because during all this time he had not totally forgiven the man. When true forgiveness is not given, bitterness and revenge start to fill the life of the person. This may not be evident in the beginning, but as time goes by, will become more noticeable. If you are having difficulty forgiving someone, ask the Lord to help you.

THE SURGEON FOR A BROKEN SPIRIT IS THE LORD!

Genesis 41:51 Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: "For God has made me forget all my toil and all my father's house." **52.** And the name of the second he called Ephraim: "For God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction."

When Joseph was seventeen years old, he was sold to some Midianite traders by his brothers, who took him to Egypt. He spent the next thirteen years working as a slave or in jail before he was released and promoted to be the second in command of the land. After he was married he had two sons, and their names reveal what had happened to his spirit. The first son's name means: "For God has made me forget all my toil and all my father's house." Had Joseph tried to accomplish this on his own, he would have ended up with a bitter spirit. It is necessary for God to cause the healing in your life, if you want to see real progress to take place in this area. Trying with your own strength or will power, will cause the old hurts to come out of your spirit later. It is also possible, that along with the hurt will come animosity or hatred.

The meaning of the name of the second son was: "For God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction." God wants to restore what was lost in your life. When true healing takes place in your spirit, God can cause you to become far more productive than you ever were before. The Lord has great plans for you; however He expects you to totally depend on Him. Relying on your own strength will only cause problems the next time you are faced with the same situation.

Jeremiah 29:11 **For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.**

RELEASE THE OFFENDER

Often many have stated that they can't forget the wrong that was done to them and will "replay the record or tape" over and over in their mind. In the natural you may be right in saying, "I can't forget." The question should be asked, "**Are you willing to forgive the person?**" You need to ask the Lord to help you overcome the problem, otherwise **it can affect you the rest of your life.** Forgetting does not refer to not recalling the situation, but not holding it against the person any more. Your primary goal should be that **you want to be set free.** You must first free - or forgive the other

person, then God will free you, by causing healing to take place in your spirit. Forgiving always goes ahead of fruitfulness.

Although you may still remember the problem on occasion, God will remove the sting of that memory, so that it will not affect you as it did.

In the past, companies as well as individuals have buried toxic wastes. Since it was covered up and not seen it could lie dormant for a period of time. Frequently rust starts to eat away the metal container, so the toxic material starts to seep out and contaminate the ground water. If the problems are not dealt with in the early stages, they become far more difficult to deal with at a later date. Just like buried toxic waste, old hurts or wounded spirits must be completely dealt with, or else they will cause problems at a later date.

The attitude of some people is: "I know I must forgive them, but I want them to suffer first." Another attitude that is wrong is: "I forgive you, but" "I forgive you" does not mean that I think it was ok, nor does it mean that it doesn't bother me. What it should mean is: **"I don't hold it against you anymore."**

In the story of Joseph being sent to Egypt, Joseph could have had very bitter feelings toward the brothers who sold him as a slave. He lost thirteen years of his life as a slave or in prison, before he was set free and promoted to being second in command in Egypt. He willingly forgave his brothers, because he saw the hand of the Lord in the matter. We need to realize that he did not see the reason God allowed it to take place for the full thirteen years. During that time he could have held a grudge, but chose to forgive them instead. At the death of his father which was twenty six years after Joseph went to Egypt, the brothers were still afraid that he might do something to them. Let's see what Joseph told them, which shows he had completely forgiven them.

Genesis 50:15 When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "Perhaps Joseph will hate us, and may actually repay us for all the evil which we did to him." **16.** So they sent messengers to Joseph, saying, "Before your father died he commanded, saying, **17.** 'Thus you shall say to Joseph: "I beg you, please forgive the trespass of your brothers and their sin; for they did evil to you." Now, please, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of your father.'" And Joseph wept when they spoke to him. **18.** Then his brothers also went and fell down before his face, and they said, "Behold, we are your servants." **19.** Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? **20.** **"But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good,** in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive. **21.** "Now therefore, do not be afraid; **I will provide for you and your little ones."** And he comforted them and

spoke kindly to them.

God was able to cause many blessings to come to Joseph because of his willingness to forgive his brothers. He was even in a position to provide for his eleven brothers and all their families. None of this would have been possible if Joseph had a spirit of bitterness toward his brothers.

YOU MUST RECONCILE

Reconciliation is only possible when both are willing to allow the Lord to restore the relationship. A **broken spirit is like a broken bone** and must be set right, if it's going to heal right.

There are several types of forgiveness and after closely examining them, you will find that some are not real forgiveness at all.

Historical forgiveness frequently brings up the past. The person with this type of attitude will periodically remind the other person of past situations. When the Lord forgives you He does not remind you of your past failures, and He expects you to allow Him to help you do the same for others.

This is what God says about how He treats your sins, and if you want Him to, He will help you do the same for others:

Hebrews 10:17 Then He adds, "Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."

Isaiah 43:25 I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; and I will not remember your sins.

False forgiveness is really unforgiveness, it wants to hang on to the past. A continuation of this attitude will lead to bitterness, and it will affect you a lot more than the person you will not really forgive. The end result is that it will **stop God's blessings and favor coming to you**. Is it worth it? The answer is NO! If this is the case in your life, ask the Lord for forgiveness for not completely forgiving the other person, and ask Him to give you the ability to overcome it.

True forgiveness will not hold the offense against the person any more. This is possible when you ask the Lord to give you the ability to completely forgive the person who offended you.

YOU MUST RE-FRAME THE PICTURE IN YOUR MIND

It is impossible to change the past, otherwise God would have reversed the bad actions of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, and then hopefully they would have learned from that experience. It becomes necessary to place a new picture in your mind, which will enable you to go on from there, instead of becoming bitter over the situation. You are to come up with a new meaning of the past.

Those who have been wounded in the past, if they don't have a real healing, will later wound others. The Lord is the One who is able to bring complete healing. He wants you to start the process by spending more time in the Word. Start today spending quality time reading your Bible. I have seen a number of school children doing their homework while watching television. They did a half-hearted job on their homework because they were distracted by the television. Set aside anything that will distract you, and turn off the phone if necessary. You may say, "Well I don't want to miss a call." If it is important enough the person will later call back. Remember your purpose is to have time to hear from God through His Word. This will enable you to overcome the difficulty.

Psalm 112:7 He will not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is steadfast, trusting in the Lord. **8.** His heart is established; he will not be afraid, until he sees his desire upon his enemies.

Your heart will remain steadfast, trusting in the Lord because you spent time in His Word. There will be times when people around you will be bringing bad news, but you don't need to worry if you have total confidence that God is going to protect you during every situation.

There will be times when hidden issues are stopping your prayers from being answered. God has shown you favor as far as you have allowed Him to, but now you must take care of the things that He does not like in your life. Your time of reading His Word and times of prayer will allow Him to reveal the problem, as well as show you what part He wants you to play to have it resolved.

7

SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Love is of God, since it first came from Him. Spiritual matters must play an important part in the lives of the couple if they want God's blessing upon them. When this is not taken into consideration, the couple can have serious problems ahead that lead to shipwreck. God wants to bless the marriage, and His requirement is that they put Him first in their lives.

Matthew 6:33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

The couple who puts God first in their lives finds that He will help them in any time of trouble. He will also meet their needs as they depend on Him and operate in divine faith. When they make an effort to live close to the Lord they will find that the fruit of the Holy Spirit will become a part of their lives.

Galatians 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **23.** gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

Many couples treat prayer as a last resort, or as a fire extinguisher - to be used only in an emergency. God wants you to be in partnership with Him. He wants you to bring your needs to Him, expecting Him to meet them, just as a child takes his needs to his father. God wants to help you to be successful, and He has promised in the Bible that He will teach you how to be successful and prosper. The key is to put God in first place in your life.

Deuteronomy 8:18 And you shall remember the Lord your God, **for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that HE MAY ESTABLISH HIS COVENANT** which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day.

Isaiah 48:17 Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: "I am the Lord your God, **Who teaches you to profit, Who leads you by the way you should go.**" **18.** Oh, that you had heeded My commandments! Then your peace would have been like a river, and your righteousness like the waves of the sea.

The Lord is looking for people who are **willing and want** to be in a true partnership with Him. He will not only **TEACH the person HOW to prosper**, but will **SEND** business to him as well.

In very mountainous regions some of the early trains needed a rack rail which was a middle rail, which enabled the train to climb steep slopes, and some trains in very mountainous areas still use this system. A slotted middle rail is used to allow a pinion wheel on the engine to engage its teeth into the slots. When the wheel rotates in the slots, the train is propelled forward up the grade, at the same time preventing the train from sliding backwards. The Holy Spirit wants to work with you in a similar way, helping you move forward in the will of the Lord, and not sliding back. This is possible in direct proportion to how you allow the Holy Spirit to direct you. He can bring provision and new life which will enable you to go over the top. When you realize that you need the power of the Lord, and then ask for His help, He will always give it to you!

Matthew 11:28 Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. **29.** Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. **30.** For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.

HINDERING YOUR PRAYERS

Husbands and wives have an obligation toward each other. Satan loves to cause a division, and an argument will sometimes start. This will stop the your prayers from being answered. Understand that these are not just the prayers that were prayed that day, but many times you have been praying for several months, and are almost at the point of receiving the answer. The answers to your prayers will be stopped until you decide to get rid of the argument, root of bitterness, or other problems that will stop the answer.

Sometimes it is necessary to bind the spirits that are causing the division.

1 Peter 3:7 Likewise you husbands, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, **THAT YOUR PRAYERS MAY NOT BE HINDERED. 8.** Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; **9. not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing,** knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing. **10.** For "He who would love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips from speaking guile."

Parents often blame their children for not being model children, not realizing that they have provided their children with a bad role model. The arguments, fights and bad examples of the parents stop their prayers from being answered.

DAILY DEVOTIONS

A baby that is not given food for a time may die of malnutrition. The same thing is true in the spiritual realm. It is very important that people be fed spiritually on a daily basis. People who do not have time, **or allow time for Bible reading and prayer daily,** will find that their spiritual life will start to diminish. They then miss the guidance of God and start getting into many more problems. God wants to be your Friend, He wants to help you daily, and this is possible when you allow time to communicate with Him.

Romans 10:17 So then **faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.**

Ephesians 3:17 That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, **being rooted and grounded in love, 18.** may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height; **19.** to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

On a number of occasions I have seen a car come towards me with one bright headlight, and the second looking like it was not working very well at all. The usual reason for this is that the ground going to the dim headlight was making a very poor contact. Frequently when looking at the wiring going to that head-light you will find that rust has developed between the end of the wire and the body of the car. Sometimes it is easier to connect a new wire from the ground wire coming from the headlight to a metal part of the car. The new grounding wire will make all the difference in giving you a

bright light. How grounded are you to God's Word? "Rust" can develop between you and your Bible reading, which will cause you to start to lose your connection with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Being grounded in the Word, as well as being grounded in the love of God is extremely important if you are going to maintain a wonderful marriage relationship.

Have you ever read the Bible completely through? Most people find it very difficult, so give up too easily. For the average person, it will take only seventy to seventy-two hours to read the Bible completely through. Some use the excuse that they don't have the time, however they will spend a lot more time reading the newspaper, watching television, involved with sports, or talking to friends. It becomes a matter of priority. How much do you claim you love the Lord? If you really love the Lord, then spend time in His Word every day. One way to read the Bible through in one year, is to read three chapters each day, and five on Sunday. Each year I like to choose a different translation, than I used the previous year. Many times this will give me a greater understanding of a particular verse. For those of us who speak more than one language, using a different one on occasion will also be very helpful. I have read the English through many times. Once I read the Afrikaans and Spanish New Testaments through, as well as the book of Mark in Swahili. What is the purpose of this? Paul tells us in Romans 10:17, that faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. I want to increase my God given faith, don't you want to do the same thing? The time will come when you will desperately need more divine faith for your protection and daily needs, because of the new problems that the world will be facing.

PRAISING THE LORD FOR THE ANSWERS

Hebrews 13:15 Therefore by Him let us continually **OFFER THE SACRIFICE OF PRAISE** to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. **16.** But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

Psalms 67:3 Let the peoples **PRAISE YOU**, O God; let all the peoples **PRAISE YOU**. **4.** Oh, let the nations be glad and sing for joy! For You shall judge the people righteously, and govern the nations on earth. **5.** Let the peoples **PRAISE YOU**, O God; let all the peoples **PRAISE YOU**. **6.** Then the earth shall yield her increase; God, our own God, shall bless us. **7.** God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him.

There are times in your life when you are faced with a situation and there seems to be no reason to praise the Lord. That is the time when you must

offer **a sacrifice of praise for the answer you are going to receive.** Praise becomes an avenue that allows the power of God to come to your aid.

It takes faith to keep on praising the Lord during the time of trials. The enemy wants to tempt you when you are faced with problems, so that you will change your praises to complaints. You need to resist those temptations to be discouraged, or feel sorry for yourself, and spend more time praising the Lord. **Faith and praise should always work together.**

Remember that the Spirit of the Lord inhabits the praises of His people, see Psalm 22:3. Where are you having problems? Is it taking place in your marriage or home, work or business? Regardless of where it is, spend time praising the Lord for the answers that are going to come. Do not remind the Lord of the things that are going wrong. **Remind God of the promises in His Word that you are depending on to overcome the problems.** Praise Him that He is going to honor His Word, which will cause the problems to be overcome.

On one occasion I was making a hole through a cement floor with a pick. I was swinging the pick as hard as I could to go through the cement. I did not realize that there was a metal pipe ahead of me that was near the wall. I hit the pipe, which made the pick bounce back and hit my head very hard. I immediately sat down and put my hands on my head. I then declared, "In the name of Jesus this is not going to bother me." A little while later I went in to lie down. At supper time I ate with the rest of the family, and then went to bed. During the night I lost everything I had eaten, which made me think that all I had was an upset stomach. The next morning I did not feel any better so I stayed in bed. I felt very weak as well as having a severe pain in my head. I had a concussion, but did not realize it at the time. I felt too sick to really believe the Lord for my healing. Sometime during the afternoon I began to praise the Lord. **The more I praised the Lord, the better I felt.** What was happening? Psalm 22:3 shows you that the Spirit of God dwells in the praises of men. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, the spirit of disease, pain or anything else that is contrary to His will has to leave. In a little while I was able to get up and ate a good meal that evening.

You are to praise Him **WITH YOUR WHOLE HEART because praise paves the way to come to the throne of grace.** The more you sincerely praise the Lord, the more you will find that **God will give you something to praise Him about.** Many Christians limit their praising the Lord to the times when they have something to be joyful about. They hurt themselves by doing this because they limit the power of God from flowing. There are times when you do not feel like praising the Lord and it becomes necessary to spend time giving a sacrifice of praise to God.

Hebrews 13:15 Therefore by Him **let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God**, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.

In the near future troubles in the world are going to greatly increase. God wants to help you immensely during that time. This will only be possible if you raise your level of faith to match the needs that will be facing you. You raise your level of divine faith by spending more time reading your Bible, see Romans 10:17. It is also necessary to believe what you read, and understand what you believe, see Matthew 13-14, 19, and Isaiah 6:9. The next thing that is needed is to act on what you believe. Start expecting the Lord to bless your marriage in a great way because you are not only using your faith, but praising Him for the answers as well.

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