

Chapter 1

When Married Life Gets Tangled

We Have Very Little In Common

My wife and I knew each other only three months before we married. Now we have discovered that we have very little in common. I am very much concerned about our future. What can you suggest?

First, recognize the fact that you married your wife for life, “till death do you part,” and then put real study into finding mutual interests. Successful marriages take time for the parties involved to become well acquainted with each other. You may not always feel like it, but enter heartily into things she enjoys, and probably as time goes on you will be able to find enjoyment in them also. Encourage her to do the same with things you enjoy. Here are two definite suggestions: (1) Plan to have your family as soon as possible, and (2) study God’s word together and make it the foundation of your home. As a husband and wife study and pray together and unite their efforts in the inspiring work of raising their family to love and honor God, happiness and satisfaction are sure to come.

Should We Separate?

My husband and I are both past sixty-five and have been married for almost fifty years. However, it seems that the longer we live together the less we seem to be able to see things the same way. Our children have suggested that we separate. What do you think?

I disagree with your children. Any couple who have been able to weather the storms of life together for almost fifty years should certainly be able to find a basis of agreement for the rest of the journey. Perhaps each of you has grown more determined in his way of looking at things and this presents problems. However, separation brings its own problems, and my prophecy is that both of you would be desperately unhappy. Don’t try it. You are nearing the end of the journey. Live from day to day so that there will be no regrets.

Who Should Manage The Money?

Money has always been a source of conflict since our marriage two years ago - not due to lack of it, but rather to how and when to spend it. My husband and I have had a joint checking account and have

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always counseled together on what bills should be paid and when. However, recently I took out a one-year subscription for a magazine and wrote a check for \$3 without consulting him. As a result he has closed our joint account, opening a new one in his name only. I am really hurt about this. Am I wrong in this attitude?

Not at all. All married couples must realize that marriage is a partnership. You are as definitely a part of the concern as your husband, and in my opinion your husband has used poor judgment in seeking to “punish” you in this way. Misunderstandings and hurts in marriage always run the risk of becoming permanent. Point out to your husband in a gentle and kindly way how you feel about the situation. Make sure that you do discuss even magazine subscriptions with him in the future since it seems to mean quite a bit to him, and of course he should be willing to be equally careful in consulting you. In financial matters, as in everything else, work toward developing a feeling of mutual confidence in one another. Do your best, with God’s help, to be like the model wife mentioned in Proverbs 31:11, “The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her.”

Wife Brags about Her First Husband

I have recently married a widow who talks endlessly about her first husband. I have heard about all of his virtues (he seems to have had no faults) and of all the things which they did together from courting days on down to the time of his death. I am beginning to wonder if I made a great mistake in marrying someone like this.

Not necessarily. It is probably true that the love of one’s youth is ordinarily a more romantic love than that of middle or old age. People tend to be a great deal more practical in later years, and marriages are contracted on a little different basis. Probably your wife will never forget her first husband, and if you think seriously about it, you would not even want her to. On the other hand, it may be that she is unconsciously expressing a wish for some of the loving attention that she felt she received previously, and which might be lacking now. Why don’t you try to do some of the little thoughtful things that show appreciation, admiration, and love? Any thoughtful little gift or remembrance, no matter how slight or trivial, when given as an expression of appreciation and affection, cannot help but warm a human heart. Soon your wife may be talking as much about your virtues as she now does about another’s.

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How Can We Quit Fighting?

My husband and I have been married ten months, and we are afraid that our marriage is going on the rocks. I love him with all my heart, - I really mean it, - and he loves me, too, but we are jealous of one another and accuse each other of things which took place in the past. As a result we get into some awful fights. Do you think we will ever get over being so silly?

Not unless you make a genuine attempt to do so. If there are things in the past that might endanger the happiness and success of your marriage, they had best be forgotten and never mentioned again. Since you both seem to see that what you are doing is silly and is detrimental to the success of your marriage, you have already solved your problem in part. Go the rest of the way and refuse to discuss anything that would bring either of you unhappiness and pain. The apostle Paul gives good advice to all of us when he says, "Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before." Philippians 3:13. Be sure to make close contact with God an important part of your life together. Forget the past and press on toward a happy future.

My Husband Loves To Tease

I wonder what the solution might be for my husband's love of teasing. Everywhere he goes he teases almost everyone - children and adults. He teases me, too, and at times I feel very indignant about it. I have pleaded with him to stop, but he can't seem to resist. About a year ago we both united with the church, and it seems to me that he has had plenty of time to drop his old habits for more lovable ones.

How wonderful that you and your husband have joined the church and that your home is not divided over religious matters. Could it be possible that you are taking his teasing too seriously? He must be a good-humored individual with a jolly reaction to life. How much preferable such an attitude is to a pessimistic, gloomy outlook. You apparently expect that since your husband has become a Christian he will no longer have his light approach to life. Conversion does not make an extroverted person into an introverted one, nor does it make an impulsive character into one who weighs carefully every decision. Christ takes us as we are and hallows and sanctifies us, using our talents in the service of the Master. The church as well as the world needs all types. Do not expect your husband to fit into some mold which you have created for him. Accept him as he is. If at times his teasing gets a

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little out of hand, you can help him a lot more to hold it within proper bounds if you have enjoyed his humor whenever possible.

I Can't Forget the Other Man

Shortly before I met my husband I had been going with another young man whom I had known for five years. My husband and I are very happy together and we now have two children. However, try as I may, I keep thinking of what might have been; and although I have a wonderful husband, I can't get this other man out of my mind. Is it wrong to feel like this?

It surely is! Recognize these thoughts for what they are - foolish, immature, and dangerous. You should remember that you have taken sacred vows which indissolubly bind you to your husband for life. You have passed the time of courtship and have made your choice, apparently a happy one. The birth of your children has served to strengthen the vows which you took. Every day, thank God for your happy home and lovely children. Ask Him to keep you from allowing your mind to dwell on wrong themes. Resolve to bring to your family all of your energies so that your lives together can continue to be happy and blessed. It is all right to wish the best for your former friends, but recognize that their lives no longer are in any way involved with yours.

Help For a Gambling Husband?

I have been married for four years and found two years ago that my husband is a chronic gambler. His gambling caused us to become deep in debt, and it was necessary for us to sell our home to pay off his debts. He promised at that time that he would never gamble again, but I have discovered that he has been continuing this practice. Is there anything that can help him?

Jesus Christ can help a man to overcome any difficulty of life, and there is no question but that the Saviour could help your husband overcome his tendency to gamble. In reality, gambling is a form of stealing. It is taking money which does not belong to one in an attempt to get "something for nothing." As in your case it is the innocent who suffer most. Some chronic gamblers are victims of personality deficiencies that could be aided with the help of an intelligent Christian psychiatrist. Your husband can be helped if he really wants help, but he needs first to be converted, asking Jesus Christ to enter his life and take from him this tendency. Romans 8:37 pictures the victory that can

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come when we yield to the Saviour: "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us."

We Have No Children

My wife and I are happily married, but we do not have any children, and this worries us a great deal. Do you think this means that God looks down on us with scorn?

I cannot believe that this would be the case. Your lack of children is likely due to some physical defect which is no more the result of God's scorn than any other physical handicap or illness. Why don't you attempt to adopt a child? In this way the love which you and your wife would wish to offer to a child of your own could be given to one who would become as dear as your own in every way. God has placed His own love within your hearts, and He does not scorn you, but loves you. You in turn may offer this love to another who desperately needs it.

How Can I Forgive My Husband?

My husband became involved with another woman and we started divorce proceedings by mutual agreement. After several months, we both decided that we loved each other and wanted to continue our lives together. He gave up the other woman. We stopped the divorce proceedings. We have moved to another state. However, I am not as happy as I wish I were. I keep thinking of the other woman. How can I overcome this?

While, of course, your husband's unfaithfulness is most unfortunate, yet you have very much for which to be grateful. When faced with making a decision, your husband chose you and was willing to leave the other woman, his job, and even the state in which you lived in order to set up life with you again. Your husband must really love you to do all this, and this should make you proud and happy. Resolve to be the best kind of wife and mother that you can possibly be. In taking him back and reestablishing your lives together, you surely have implied forgiveness for what he has done. Forgiveness also includes forgetting to the best of your ability. Doing anything else causes you to run the risk of erecting a barrier between you and your husband. Don't let your marriage be ruined by a memory.

Should I Try To Save My Home?

My husband has told me that he is in love with another woman, and has asked me to secure a divorce so that he might be free to marry

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her. I have never believed in divorce and cannot bring myself to it, even though it is evident that I have ample grounds. We have one child, aged seven. My husband continues to live at home and at times seems to be happy, so I am very perplexed. What do you think I ought to do?

Since you do not desire a divorce, I think it would be unwise for you to secure it. If your husband really wants to be free to marry someone else, it probably will not be too hard for him to secure a divorce. Perhaps the fact that he has not attempted to do so indicates that deep in his heart he really wants to do the right thing. If you can bring yourself to shower him with love and kindness, making your home a place of great attraction and interest at this crucial time, you may save your husband from foolishly making a very disastrous mistake. You have nothing to lose by doing this, and entering wholeheartedly into such a plan, you might very well save your home.

Are We Really Married?

I am a Catholic, and my husband, and I were married by a "Protestant minister. According to the teachings of my church I committed a very serious sin, and I feel very bad about it. Most of my friends in the community in which we live tell me that I am married in the eyes of the Lord, but my family feels that I am not married, seeing that one of my own faith did not perform the ceremony. What do you think?

Nowhere in the Bible are we told that in order for our marriage to be recognized by heaven it must be performed by any specific person. Since marriage is a vow which one makes before God as well as before one's fellowmen, it would seem to be a fine thing if marriages were performed by the clergy. However, it would be wrong to think that anyone who went to a civil authority or to a clergyman of a faith other than his own would be any less married in the eyes of the Lord. You are married in the sight of the law of the land, and certainly in the sight of God. Your problem undoubtedly stems from the fact that you and your husband are of differing faiths. This always produces difficult circumstances and is one of the big reasons why mixed marriages are frowned upon by the Scriptures. However, since you are already married, you should by all means work to make a success of your marriage.

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Differing Religions Create Problem

How can a family go on raising children when husband and wife are of different religions? For instance, I am Jewish, and my wife is a devout Catholic.

Rabbis, priests, and ministers all agree that mixed marriages have great hazards and handicaps. While the Scriptures warn against forming such a marriage, they are equally firm in stating that marriage is a lifetime partnership. The Bible admits only adultery as grounds for dissolving a marriage. Therefore divorce is not the solution to your problem. You have a responsibility to your wife and to your children. You and your wife should try to find a common faith which you could share together. If this is impossible, then you must come to some understanding regarding respect for the religious outlook of the other. Only as you achieve such an understanding can your marriage possibly succeed permanently.