

Credits and Dedication

This book is designed to help you and your fiancé prepare your hearts for the greatest calling and adventure you will ever experience! We are not so interested in helping you with all the little time line planning details. Rather, we want to help you search your heart, coach you, and help you learn to fall in love with the Lord Jesus Christ, the Author of Marriage. You do that and He will work out all the rest.

Much of this material is designed for you and your fiancé to work through together before you get married in order to enrich and strengthen your marital relationship later. Please keep this in mind as you go through each chapter, exercise, or reading.

We hope that throughout your engagement, you will thoroughly chew on the following questions:

- Why are we getting married?
- Will the Lord's work be advanced more if we marry?
- What expectations do I and my fiancé each have regarding marriage and family?
- Are the Lord Jesus and His Word at the **epicenter** of each expectation?
- How will the timing of our wedding most insure that the Lord is honored and that our marital relationship steps off on the right foot?

Sections of the material in this book are adapted from some of our other published writings: **Remember the Rowboats: Anchor your Marriage to Christ, Home to Home: Passing on Five Cornerstones of Christian Marriage, and Embracing the Truth: Understanding the Eight Keys to Christian Living.**

We want to acknowledge and thank Linda Montgomery (marriage and family branch of the Military Ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ) for her excellent contributions as Contributing Editor. She and her husband, Mike, are great encouragements to us!

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Introduction

You Want Me to Pilot a 747 Jet? When?

You are making plans to get married or you are thinking about making plans to get married. What a great calling and adventure ahead of you! As you well know, this life-altering decision is one that must not be entered into lightly. No doubt knowing that half of your friend's marriages will end in utter destruction has caused you concern. It needs to. The marriage relationship is unique. It was and still is ordained by the God of the Bible. Jumping into God's marriage with poor training and/or a nonexistent or weak relationship with the One who ordained it makes no sense!

So many couples these days choose to live together first in order to see if they are compatible. It seems more economical and it sure seems like it solves the problem of being lonely. Biblically, this makes about as much sense as jumping into a wide patch of quicksand. The sinking ones say, "That's funny, it looked like solid, proven ground while I was jumping in!" Many come back later, after the resulting sinking, isolation, and destruction and say "I was wrong! Why didn't someone warn me of the miseries, curses, and dangers of making a mockery of God's holy and sacred institution, marriage?"

If someone told you that on June 10th, you would have to put on the Captain's airline uniform with well earned wings, step into the complicated cockpit of a brand new 747 Jet airliner and fly it, would you focus on the uniform and décor or the training you need for the ominous task? This is not to say that planning the wedding is not important, but preparing for the marriage is infinitely more so.

With careful, calm, and proper preparation, the days, weeks, and months after your wedding will be remembered with much joy and gratitude. With little preparation and a poor take off, your "Marriage Plane" will probably go down into a field somewhere. When I married my first wife, not only did I enter marriage clueless but was in bondage to people-pleasing and lust. Although I made a decision to trust the Lord Jesus Christ at the age of 18 while a freshman in college, my heart was divided between loving and following Jesus and thirsting for recognition and self-centered pleasures. This first marriage almost ended after 7 rather long and difficult years. I regret those years of truly poor, godless "me first" choices.

Barbara and I want to help you any way we can. We hope we gain your trust. We will be as honest with you as we can. It is our desire to help prepare you for God's great calling and mission involving His marriage of you and your fiancé. Please feel free to contact us anytime. www.marriageanchors.com Office: 262-642-5092, Jim's cell: 262-745-4160, Barbara's cell: 262-745-9653, Jim's e-mail: jgrunseth@centurytel.net Barbara's e-mail: rberrybarb@centurytel.net . Our family photo and ministry resource site: www.ourfamilynews.com/grunseth . See back pages for more helpful information and links.

Chapter 1

Don't Get Married!

Kate came to our home recently because she was troubled over so many issues in her life. She expressed deep anger and frustration because things were not going her way. She had been married once before but that ended in disaster.

She desperately wanted peace and hope in her life. She had been to at least twenty counselors and pastors over the years. She either did not like their advice or they simply told her things she wanted to hear to pacify her.

We strongly advised her to end her relationship with a controlling, immoral man who did not follow or serve the Lord Jesus. She said she did not want to do that. She **felt** that continuing to meet with this man was **God's plan** for her spiritual growth.

We referred her to the **Living Truth**, the written Word of God, the Bible. God is quite clear about **His plan**.

*“Do not be **yoked** together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?”*

(2 Corinthians 6:14)

She got mad over this straightforward confrontation. Here she was....a mid-forties Christian woman expecting God to revolve around her hopes, needs, wishes, and dreams. Kate is dearly loved by her Heavenly Father, yet she has fallen into the devil's trap. She has swallowed the lie “God wants me happy. He will allow me to disobey Him so that my plans can be fulfilled.”

She said, “I learned so much from this difficult relationship! How could it not be ordained by God?” We shared with her that if her choices in life oppose God's Word, then her choices oppose and offend God Himself.

She sat there in her lonely, selfish misery and cried.

Then she said that she wants to get married again someday sooner rather than later. “I don't want to be alone. I want to love and be loved just like most people want.”

Barbara, in her quiet, merciful, discerning way, gently looked into Kate's eyes and said to her, “**Don't get married!**” Kate looked absolutely blown off the map! The look on Kate's face said, “How can you say such a cruel thing? God wants me happy!”

There are many passages from God's Word that she needs to humbly embrace. One such verse is Joshua 22:5 ESV

*“Only be **very careful** to observe the commandment and the law that Moses the servant of the LORD **commanded** you, to **love** the LORD your God, and to **walk** in all his*

*ways and to **keep** his commandments and to **cling** to him and to **serve** him with **all** your heart and with **all** your soul."* {**Bold** added}

Barbara tried to help her understand that if you want to marry someday, you must be willing to die to your selfish plans. She urged Kate to humble herself and cry out to the Lord Jesus to arrest her heart so that she would surrender fully and daily to the hopes, plans and dreams of her Lord, Teacher, Friend, and Savior. His Word, the manna from Heaven, would be her guide.

Barbara stated again. "**Don't get married!** ...unless the Lord calls or commands you to marry a godly man who's faith has been tested by trial, and who has been proven to be faithful to the Lord and his path of Truth."

Barbara boldly went further. She told Kate, "**Don't get married!**...unless your ministry together will glorify God more than remaining single." Kate was shocked to learn that God's ordained marriage is not so much about happiness, closeness, and "lovy dovy-ness". Rather it is about one Christian man and one Christian woman humbly surrendering to Christ and obeying His command to enter into His marriage to advance His Kingdom.

We need to heed the following verses in terms of relating to God's sacred calling and mission in light of marriage:

"As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received." (Ephesians 4:1)

"We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me." (Colossians 1:28,29)

"All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation:" (2 Corinthians 5:18)

"We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us." (2 Corinthians 5:20a)

When Kate left, she apologized for getting angry. She thanked us for sharing the loving Truth with her. What she does with the Truth is between her and God.

So for all who read this and are thinking of getting married...**Don't get married!**...Unless:

1. The Lord commands you to marry a faith-tested, faith-proven godly person.
2. Your ministry together will glorify God more than remaining single.

Chapter 2

And Everyone Who Calls

As you pray and make plans for your wedding, your honeymoon, and your marriage, it is imperative that you take the following Old Testament verse very seriously.

*“And everyone who **calls** on the name of the LORD will be saved;”* (Joel 2:32a) (**bold** added)

Many of your friends and perhaps some in your family have never read this verse or could care less about it. Barbara and I cannot stress enough the fundamental importance of this Scripture. The Hebrew word, “**call**” means literally to “cry out, to call out, to proclaim from the utter depths of your heart”.

The Lord Jesus is the One you must cry out to. Fully embracing Him and His Word, the Bible, as your only hope for a fruitful, loving marriage. Please put off the wedding indefinitely until you come to the point in your life where you cry out with that deep, groaning soul cry. Beg the Lord Jesus to save you from your sin, wickedness, self-centered values and certain hopeless eternity separated from God and loved ones. You must realize you are **forever doomed** without Him.

Have you once and for all settled the questions: Do you belong to God? Are you going to Heaven? Are you a child of God? Is Jesus Christ really your personal Lord, Savior, and Master? Who is your anchor in life? When all else fails, will your anchor also fail you? When others betray and lie to you, will your anchor do likewise? Consider the following questions:

1. Where did you come from?

- God loves you and created you to know Him personally. He is loving and true and would never lie to you.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)

- The One True God of the Bible formed you in your mother’s womb.

“For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.” (Psalm 139:13,14)

2. If God has created you and loves you, what is preventing you from knowing Him intimately?

God wants to give you a fresh start. A clean slate is just a prayer away.

- You are sinful and separated from God, so you cannot know Him intimately or experience His saving, keeping, and protecting love.

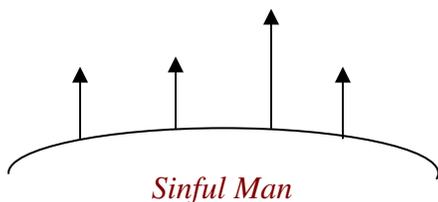
“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,” (Romans 3:23)

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 6:23)

- Just as fire and gasoline cannot be together, those who have the stain of sin can never be in the presence of a holy, sinless, and perfect God.
- You must be pardoned. Your sin must be forever washed away.
- God created man to have fellowship with Him, but due to his own stubborn self-will, he chose to go his own independent, selfish way, and fellowship was broken. This self-will, characterized by an attitude of active rebellion or passive indifference, is an evidence of what the Bible calls sin.

Holy God

God is holy and man is sinful. A great gulf separates the two. The arrows illustrate that man is continually trying to reach God and establish a personal relationship with Him through his own efforts, such as a good life, philosophy, or religion--- but he inevitably fails.



3. If there were only **One Way** to bridge this gulf, would you want to know it?

In 1830, George Wilson was tried by the U.S. court in Philadelphia for robbery and murder and was sentenced to hang. Andrew Jackson, President of the United States, granted him a presidential pardon. But Wilson refused the pardon, insisting it was not a pardon unless he accepted it. The question was brought before the U. S. Supreme Court, and Chief Justice John Marshall wrote the following decision: “A pardon is a paper, the value of which depends upon its acceptance by the person implicated. It’s hardly to be supposed that one under sentence of death would refuse to accept a pardon, but if it is refused, it is no pardon. George Wilson must hang.” What was the outcome? George Wilson was hanged.¹

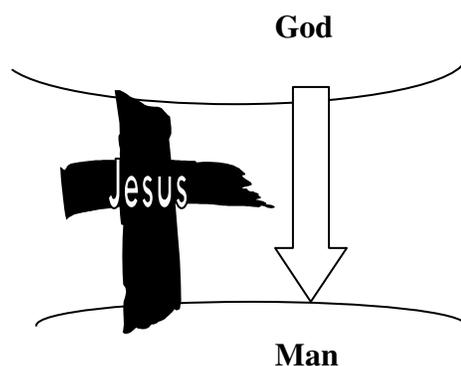
- Jesus Christ is God’s **only** provision for man’s sin. Through Him alone we can know God intimately, be fully pardoned for our sin, and experience His unconditional love.

“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12)

- He died in our place and rose from the dead.

“Christ died for our sins...He was buried...He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. He appeared to Peter, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred.” (1Corinthians 15:3-6)

- He is the only way to God.



This diagram illustrates that God has bridged the gulf that separates us from Him by sending His Son, Jesus Christ. He chose to die on the cross in our place to pay the penalty for our sins.

- Those who love darkness, reject Christ, and refuse His free offer of forgiveness and new life will perish. They will be eternally condemned for their sins. The

wrath of God will fall on them. They will be cast forever into the Lake of Fire in Hell. No rescue! No comfort! No hope!

“They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.” (2 Thessalonians 7:10b-12)

4. What must occur in order for you to be saved from your sins and eternal death and be assured of complete forgiveness and Heaven?

- You must individually receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Then you can know God personally and experience His love.

“Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.” (John 1:12)

- You receive Christ by faith.

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast.”
(Ephesians 2:8,9)

Receiving Christ involves turning to God from sin and self-rule (repentance) and trusting Christ to come into our lives to forgive us of our sins and to make us what He wants us to be. Just to agree intellectually that Jesus Christ is the Son of God is not enough. Nor is it enough to have an emotional experience. We receive Christ by faith, as an act of our will.

- When you receive Christ, a Great Exchange occurs instantly!

First: Jesus takes all of your past, present, and future sin, condemnation and guilt away. Back on that Cross, Jesus removed your sins and placed them on Himself. He was crucified, became guilty on your behalf, and was condemned. He then suffered torment in Hell so you would not have to. He freed you from the penalty and power of sin.

Second: In exchange, Jesus gives you His righteousness and His life. You are forgiven, unable to be condemned, holy, blameless, pure, and forever innocent of all charges. You have eternal life. God, the Father, now sees you holy and perfect. He loves you the same as He loves Jesus. This exchange is irrevocable. It is finished!

“I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.” (Isaiah 61:10)

5. Would you like to receive Christ right now by faith through prayer?

Here is a suggested prayer:

Lord Jesus, I need You. I want to be assured of going to Heaven when I die. I also want to know You personally. Thank You for dying on the cross for my sins. I open the door of my life and receive You as my Savior and Lord.

Thank You for forgiving me of my sins and giving me eternal life. Take control of the throne of my life. Make me the kind of person You want me to be.

- Remember: Jesus is now in your life. You belong to Him. He will never leave you nor forsake you. You are God’s own son or daughter. The Bible promises eternal life to all who receive Christ.

Heaven is your new home!

“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand.” (John 10:27-29)

He, who saves your soul, keeps your marriage.

Think of your upcoming marriage as a ship that will soon be in a storm out in the ocean. Without Jesus you will take on water, drift, list, then sink and be lost.

As you walk by faith in this Christian life, you must also remain married by faith. If you are depending on anything other than the Lord Jesus to sustain you or your relationships, you will finish this life poorly and will regret the way you lived.

Anchoring your future marriage to Christ means you agree it is not “your” marriage, but God’s. Matthew 19:4-6 reads:

*“‘Haven’t you read,’ he replied, ‘that at the beginning the Creator made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’? So they are no longer two, but one. **Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.**” (Bold added)*

In the King James Version, the word for “separate” is translated “put asunder” which in the Greek means, “to place room between, that is, part; reflexively to go away: —depart, put asunder, separate.” (Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance)

Malachi 2:15,16 reads:

“Has not the LORD made them one? In flesh and spirit they are his. And why one? Because he was seeking godly offspring. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth.

*“**I hate divorce,**” says the LORD God of Israel, “and I hate a man’s covering himself with violence as well as with his garment,” says the LORD Almighty. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith.” (Bold added)*

You see you do not have the authority or the right to tamper with or tarnish anything God has ordained. Since your God hates divorce, you must hate divorce. Why would you ever do anything that God hates? If you belong to God, then you and everything you hold dear must be in subjection to His will, His desires, His plan, and according to His Word, the Bible.

Endnote

¹ destined for security, “Session 1: Can You Be Secure in Your Relationship with God,” pages 13-14, Life Builders, Campus Crusade for Christ, 2003

Chapter 3

Beware!

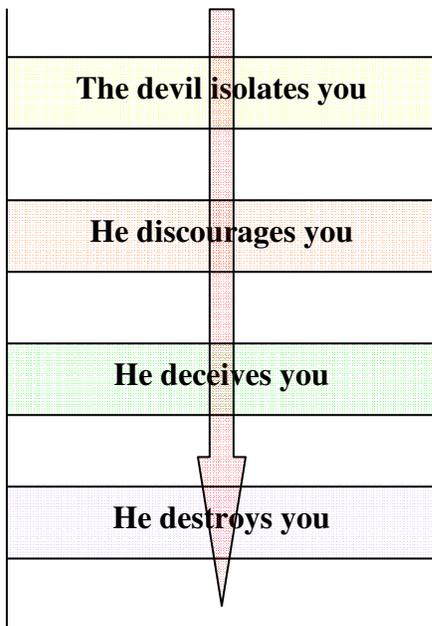
Imagine quietly resting under a tall pine, on the edge of a large stand of trees. It is late morning on a warm, sunny day. All is still except for the gentle breeze. You look up and see the treetops quietly swaying, softly whispering. You sigh deeply and close your eyes.

As you contemplate the serenity of your surroundings, your attention is soon drawn to the lake's shoreline about 30 feet away. You begin to observe the lake and the natural forces that affect it. Think of the lake as the environment in which you live. Like two rowboats, you and your fiancé are at the mercy of the environment unless you have a plan and you both work diligently at it.

There will be pressures and forces at work in your upcoming marriage that will affect your relationship and the relationships you come in contact with. Pressures will naturally and gradually wear down the sweetness and health of your relationship. Right now, being engaged and all, you can't keep apart. After the altar, you may begin to not mind being apart. Later on, you may very well look forward to being apart. Unless equipped, your future marriage loyalties will wane. Most of the time, these forces lead your marriage through four stages we call the **Devil's Ladder**. The Lord, however, has a sure plan for your marriage, the **Lord's Ladder**.

DEVIL'S LADDER

He pulls you down.



Lord's Ladder

He lifts you up!

