

Thoughts

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A Single View of Marriage ([View in PDF](#))

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Disclaimer

These thoughts are strictly from the "outside looking in." Not being married, and having had very little interaction with women, all I have are observations as a single person, so I welcome all criticism (constructive or otherwise).

Perhaps I observe more than I should, but it's impossible to miss what you see at work, church, a restaurant, in your neighborhood, or even in the aisle of a supermarket. Sometimes the most powerful statements about a relationship are made in the shortest of moments, and smallest of details—the ones in which we think no-one sees.

Commands from God's Word

Why do men and women sometimes seem to annoy each other? Why is there often a cynical attitude towards the way God made them—the things that make them unique—and that they cannot change? It's healthy to be able to laugh at ourselves and admit our [differences](#)—after all, they are real—but great care must be taken in what the underlying attitude is in all of it. The old saying, "often the truth is spoken in jest" can be very revealing. There's a fine line in humor; it's okay to laugh, but not at the expense of others. Never should a genuine concern or question be dismissed from either side. I've always been encouraged when seeing a married couple desire to understand and accept each other in the way God made them. I'm sure it's not easy to do, but setting aside pride, and being honest about ourselves and our attitudes will go a long way in minimizing potential bumps and needless arguments. I believe men and women *can* understand each other, even when the bottom line comes down to hormones (and in one way or another, every one of us are affected by them). However, it undoubtedly takes genuine effort and motivation to ask those questions.



Rob and Laura Petrie arguing in [The Dick Van Dyke Show](#) (Season 2, Episode 9: "[The Night the Roof Fell In](#)")

[Ephesians 4:31-32](#) (NASB): *"Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you."*

[Colossians 3:18-19](#) (NASB): *"Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be embittered against them."*

[1 Thessalonians 5:11](#) (NASB): *"Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing."*

[1 Peter 3:1-7](#) (NASB): *"In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior. Your adornment must not be merely external—braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God. For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands; just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear. You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered."*

In His Word, God presents both the needs and concerns of marriage, but also the wonder and beauty of what He deems holy. Parts of [Colossians](#), [Ephesians](#), and [1 Corinthians](#) for example, deal with loving your spouse for who they are, while the [Song of Solomon](#) vividly describes the beauty of intimacy and passion. Throughout Scripture, it's clear that God intended marriage to be something very beautiful and honorable—not cheap, or second-rate as the world relentlessly depicts.

Cautions

I wrestle with a growing aversion to marriage—not because of what it's *designed to be*, but rather how it all-too-often [ends up being](#). With most marriages ending in divorce (due to finances, adultery, pornography, [sexual refusal from a spouse](#), etc.), I have to honestly ask myself: "Would I fail? Is marriage worth the risk of potentially life-long frustration? If I met the right person, would I be the spouse that God commands me to be? Would she be toward me? Would our relationship survive the numerous attacks and challenges that surround and threaten marriage today? Would I find myself with a refusing spouse who could care less about affection and intimacy? After all, before she is married, no bride-to-be ever admits to her fiancé: "By the way, sex disgusts me, so don't get any ideas about trying to enjoy it with me!"



Rob and Laura resolving their differences
(Season 2, Episode 9: ["The Night the Roof Fell In"](#))

The reality is that marriage is a calculated, but risky, gamble. Nothing is ever perfect, and some wounds can run very deep. Perhaps the greatest fear is committing ourselves to a potential lifetime void of intimacy with no guarantee that either husband or wife will (as God commands in 1 Corinthians 7) passionately cherish and pursue each other after the honeymoon is over. What pornography is to men, the battle of the mind is to women:

*"I just want to encourage you to keep saying what needs to be said about sexual intimacy in marriage. I stand here as (a former) one of those wives that you are writing about today. If it hadn't been for people like you, Julie, declaring the truth, I would still be denying my husband and myself of the closeness we now share. **We had been married almost 25 years before I realized my sin.***

My husband used to tell me what my denial did to him. I didn't believe him. I don't know why. He never lied to me about anything before. It wasn't until I started reading Sheila's, J's, and Julie's blogs and saw that these were women saying the same things my husband always said that I finally was broken.

Keep telling the truth, Julie, even if you feel like you're "preaching to the choir." You never know the lives you may change." — Reader comment from [The Sexual Sin No-One Will Talk About](#)

Everyone agrees that a healthy marriage requires love, commitment, discipline, selflessness, and constant communication—none of which are easy, and certainly requires a lot of work! However, other than the

anticipation of the wedding and the honeymoon, are there any benefits of this commitment and hard work? It seems after that (at least according to the media and even a number of people I've talked to) it's all downhill from there.

- **Not being given a positive picture from media:** It's no surprise that the media is rife with movies, sitcoms, and talk shows (with "experts") portraying and promoting anything-but-healthy marital relationships, and comic strips such as the [Lockhorns](#) or [Andy Capp](#) constantly depict negative aspects of marriage—after all, it's a given that Satan is more than happy to attack what God ordained, and meant for good. Granted, they wouldn't have an audience if there were no element of truth to them, but all the more reason to wonder where the positive side of marriage is ever shared or celebrated?
- **Not enough sharing:** Providing it wasn't too personal, when was the last time a married friend shared what they genuinely appreciated about being married? Perhaps a thought or aspect of it? It seems strangely natural—almost expected—to hear complaints or jokes about marriage or spouses, and yet almost unthinkable to hear [positive aspects or thoughts](#) being shared. Does sharing something positive almost sound ludicrous or impossible?
- **Not minding language used:** How do you refer to your husband or wife? References such as "the husband" or "the wife" reflect a denigrating attitude and view instead of love and consideration. Deep down, do you see your husband or wife as an object to make fun of, or your lifetime friend and spouse that only you know deeply?
- **Not communicating love for your children verbally:** I constantly—not just frequently—hear married couples speak negatively about their children and the woes of being parents. It's very rare when they actually say something positive about them. May I ask a simple question? Why didn't these couples ever stop and consider the full ramifications of their decision to have one or more children? We know parenting is difficult and your children aren't perfect (like the rest of us); but if all you say is negative, it's difficult to understand *why on earth* you ever wanted children in the first place.

Living biblically

What **are** the [benefits](#) ([extra link](#))? These basic principles—[if followed](#) in God's grace and strength—are designed to lead to a stable and enjoyable marital union:

- Affection
- Commitment
- Communication
- Companionship
- Forgiveness
- Gratitude
- Intimacy (sexual and emotional)
- Kindness
- Love
- Respect
- Trust

I know it's all too easy for me to see marriage through rose-colored glasses, but if you really think about it, I often wonder if that isn't how God *wants* us to see it, even if it *is* easier said than done. We need to be realistic—problems will come—but without a positive goal in mind, what is there to strive for?

Marriage *is* a good and honorable thing. There are plenty of Scripture verses that talk about this, but here are just a few:

[Hebrews 13:4](#) (NASB): *"Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge."*

[Proverbs 18:22](#) (NASB): *"He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the Lord."*

[Deuteronomy 24:5](#) (NASB): *"When a man takes a new wife, he shall not go out with the army nor be charged with any duty; he shall be free at home one year and shall give happiness to his wife whom he has taken."*

[Proverbs 19:14](#) (NASB): *"House and wealth are an inheritance from fathers, but a prudent wife is from the Lord."*

[Proverbs 31:28-31](#) (NASB): *"Her children rise up and bless her; her husband also, and he praises her, saying: 'Many daughters have done nobly, but you excel them all.' Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her the product of her hands, and let her works praise her in the gates."*

[Malachi 2:15](#) (NLT) *"Didn't the Lord make you one with your wife? In body and spirit you are his. And what does he want? Godly children from your union. So guard your heart; remain loyal to the wife of your youth."*

Contrasting examples

Non-biblical examples include selfishness, bitterness, lack of respect and love, and are evidenced by little or no physical contact, minimal eye contact, demeaning comments (especially in front of others), and no motivation to understand or resolve problems.

Biblical examples include spouses who strive to respect and understand each other and their differences, and refuse to make fun of one another at any time. Difficult challenges and problems are tackled with honest discussion, and without using each other as targets inside or outside the home.

- **Biblical:** Bruce and Carol Britten—a missionary couple who continually lived God's Word in front of me, and who expressed their appreciation for each other in front of others. Bruce frequently shared in his prayer letters the ways in which Carol was thoughtful of him by always having a meal ready even on days when he got home late from work, and how she never complained or was negative about it.
- **Non-biblical:** Common complaints about "honeydo" lists, generalizations about the other sex, such as being "too emotional" or criticism of not wanting to talk right away when you get home.
- **Biblical:** Two missionary engineers I knew/have known for a number of years—Steve Wilson and Mike Axman—never said anything negative about their wives in front of me. There was, and has always been, a very solid, mutual respect between them and their wives.
- **Non-biblical:** Many years ago, someone I knew was asked to share a few thoughts at an engagement celebration for his friend and their fiancée. Toward the end of his speech, his words were essentially "Don't try to understand your wife—you won't be able to" which not only publicly belittled his friend's fiancée, but his own wife, and every woman present at the celebration.
- **Biblical:** Mike and Tracy Yoder—a couple who led Nappanee Missionary Church's "242" Small Church (so named for [Acts 2:42](#)) for several years in the early 2000s. Mike complimented Tracy in class several times—a good example of publicly building each other up (not in a prideful way; but a thankful, sincere manner). This set a great example for others to follow.
- **Biblical:** Denis and Judy Fogo—a missionary couple who had a friendly pillow fight together. I'd never seen a married couple do that before—and they weren't newlyweds, either. They had fun!
- **Biblical:** Before one of my fellow coworkers (45 years old at the time) was married, the men where I work held a very different bachelors party for him: an evening of encouragement and sharing. It was a great

example to me of husbands sharing both the joys and difficulties of marriage, and the ways in which they were motivated to resolve them, and throughout it all to love, respect, and appreciate their wives.

[The Dick van Dyke Show](#): Why mention a TV show? Because Rob & Laura Petrie worked through problems and misunderstanding, and sought to understand one another *without belittling each other*. They fought **for** the health of their marriage. Even within the show, there is a stark contrast between Rob & Laura's relationship, and the relationship between Buddy Sorrell (Rob's coworker), and his wife "Pickles." Most of the episodes were written by Carl Reiner, who based the relationship of Rob & Laura on his own marriage—pretty rare for a secular comedy show in the 60s. Rob makes a great statement toward the end (23m 11s) of [The Man from Emperor](#) (Season 4, Episode 5):



Over the phone: explaining boundaries
(Season 4, Episode 5: "[The Man from Emperor](#)")

"Marriage, like a lot of other things, has boundaries.

And to some guys, those boundaries represent walls, and that makes marriage a prison to them. But to other guys, those boundaries hold everything that's good and fun in life."

The world would have us believe that purity as God commands is living life in a straitjacket, but in reality, it's a Kevlar vest keeping us alive and whole. The practical translation of this comes in the form of love, sensitivity, forgiveness, respect, understanding, patience, honor, and is evidenced by: playfulness, frequent eye contact and smiles, physical contact such as hugging, kissing (and more), as well as enduring thoughtfulness, admiration, and motivation to resolve problems quickly.

Encouraging others

I've been challenged and encouraged by those who have displayed trust and patience for their spouses, and who seek to understand motives and feelings instead of brushing them off. Married couples have the opportunity to demonstrate Christ and encourage others watching them more than they may think in how they talk to, with, and about their spouse.

I'm a firm believer in [Genesis 2:18](#). In spite of not having found a wife, I always appreciate being able to learn as much as I can from [others' experience](#) and godly advice. From the single view, I want to say "Thank you!" to all those couples whose examples and testimonies demonstrate biblical love for each other in very tangible ways. I want to encourage you to continue honoring God, striving to love and understand your spouse, and seeking to have fun together. Always.

Thanks to...

I want to express my sincere appreciation to Barb Stahly for her kind encouragement on this article, and great feedback to improve its readability.

Related links: [The Alabaster Jar](#) | [Mystery32](#) | [Christian Marriage Bloggers Association](#)

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