

## SEVENTEEN RULES FOR A HAPPY MARRIAGE FROM GOD'S GREAT BOOK

### 1. Establish your own private home.

**"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." Genesis 2:24.**

*Comment:* God's rule is specific. A married couple must leave father and mother and establish their own home, even if finances require that it be a one-room apartment. Husband and wife should decide together on such policies as these. Then she should inform her relatives and he, his. They must remain firm no matter who opposes. Thousands of divorces would be avoided if this rule were carefully followed.

### 2. Continue your courtship.

**"Above all hold unfailing your love for one another, since love covers a multitude of sins." 1 Peter 4:8, RSV. "Her husband ...praiseth her." Proverbs 31:28. "She that is married careth ...how she may please her husband." 1 Corinthians 7:34. "Be kindly affectioned on to another ... in honour preferring one another." Romans 12:10.**

*Comment:* Continue (or perhaps revive) the courtesies of courtship in your married life. Successful marriages do not just happen; they must be developed. Don't take each other for granted, or the monotony that results will destroy your marriage. Keep love growing by expressing love for one another or it will die, and you will drift apart. Love and happiness are not found by seeking them for yourself, but rather by giving them to others. So spend as much time as possible doing things together if you would get along well. Learn to greet each other with enthusiasm. Relax, visit, shop, sightsee, eat together. Don't overlook the little courtesies, encouragements, and affectionate acts. Surprise each other with little gifts or favors. Try to "outlove" each other. Don't take more out of marriage than you put into it. Divorce itself is not the greatest destroyer of marriage, but rather, lack of love. Given a chance, love always wins.

### 3. Remember that God joined you together in marriage.

**"For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife. ... Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder." Matthew 19:5, 6.**

*Comment:* Has love almost disappeared from your home? The devil (that notorious homebreaker) is responsible for this. Don't forget that God Himself joined you together in marriage, and He intends for you to stay together in marriage, and He intends for you to stay together and be happy. He will bring happiness and love into your lives if you will obey His divine rules (commandments). "With God all things are possible." Matthew 19:26. Don't despair. God, who places love in the heart of a missionary for a leprous savage, can easily give you love for each other if you will let Him.

#### **4. Guard your thoughts—don't let your senses trap you.**

**"For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he." Proverbs 23:7. "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife." Exodus 20:17. "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." Proverbs 4:23. "Whatever things are true, ...honest, ...just, ...pure, ...lovely, ...of good report; ...think on these things." Philippians 4:8**

*Comment:* The wrong kind of thinking will destroy your marriage. The devil will trap you with thoughts like these: "Our marriage was a mistake." "She doesn't understand me." "I can't take much more of this." "We can always divorce if necessary." "I'll go home to mother." "He smiled at that woman." "Stop thinking thoughts like these or your marriage is gone, because your thoughts and senses govern your actions. Avoid seeing, saying, reading, or hearing anything that (or associating with anyone who) suggests impurity or unfaithfulness. Thoughts uncontrolled are like an automobile in neutral on a hill. Anything can happen, and the result is always disaster.

#### **5. Never retire for the night angry with each other.**

**"Let not the sun go down upon your wrath." Ephesians 4:26. "Confess your faults one to another." James 5:16. "Forgetting those things which are behind." Philippians 3:13. "Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Ephesians 4:32.**

*Comment:* To remain angry and upset over hurts and grievances (big or little) is exceedingly dangerous. Unless quickly solved, even little problems become set in your mind as convictions and attitudes adversely affecting your whole philosophy of life. This is why God says to let anger cool before retiring at night. Be big enough to forgive and to say with sincerity, "I'm sorry." After all, no one is perfect, and you are both on the same team, so be sportsmanlike enough to honestly admit a mistake when you make it. Besides, making up is a very pleasant experience, with unusual powers to draw marriage partners closer together. God suggests it! It works!

#### **6. Keep Christ in the center of your home.**

**"Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it." Psalm 127:1. "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." Proverbs 3:6. "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:7.**

*Comment:* This is the greatest rule. It really covers all the others. Put Christ first! The real secret of true happiness in the home is not diplomacy, strategy, and untiring effort to overcome problems, but rather, union with Christ. Hearts filled with Christ's love can never be very far apart. With Christ in the home, marriage will be successful. The gospel is the cure for all marriages that are filled with hatred, bitterness, and disappointment. It prevents thousands of divorces by miraculously restoring love and happiness. It will save your marriage, too, if you are willing.



## 7. Pray together.

**"Pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."** Matthew 26:41. **"Pray one for another."** James 5:16. **"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally."** James 1:5.

*Comment:* Pray aloud for each other! This is a wonderful rule that succeeds beyond the wildest dream. Kneel before God and ask Him for true love for one another, for forgiveness, for strength, for wisdom—for the solution to problems. God has given a personal guarantee that He will answer. The praying person is not automatically cured of all of his faults, but he will have a heart that wants to do right. No family ever breaks up while sincerely praying together for God's help.

## 8. Agree that divorce is not the answer.

*next* **"What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."** Matthew 19:6. **"Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery."** Matthew 19:9. **"The woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth."** Romans 7:2.

*Comment:* The Bible is clear. The ties of marriage are meant to be indissoluble and indestructible. Divorce is permissible only in the case of adultery. But even then it is not demanded, only permitted. Forgiveness is always better than divorce, even in the case of a moral fall. Marriage is for life. God so ordained it when he performed the first wedding in Eden. Thoughts of divorce as a solution will destroy any marriage. This is one reason Jesus ruled it out. Divorce is always destructive and almost never a solution to the problem. Instead, it creates much greater problems, so it should never be considered. Torn, frustrated, unhappy, twisted lives almost inevitably follow divorce, and even success in life itself is often thwarted. God instituted marriage to guard people's purity and happiness, to provide for their social needs, and to elevate their physical, mental, and moral nature. Its vows are among the most solemn and binding obligations that human beings can assume. To lightly set them aside results in removing one's self from God's favor and blessing.

## 9. Keep the family circle closed tightly.

**"Thou shalt not commit adultery."** Exodus 20:14. **"The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her. ...She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life."** Proverbs 31:11, 12. **"The Lord hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou dealt treacherously."** Malachi 2:14. **"Keep thee from the evil woman. ...Lust not after her beauty in thine heart; neither let her take thee with her eyelids. ...Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? ...So he that goeth in to his neighbour's wife, whosoever toucheth her shall not be innocent."** Proverbs 6:24-29.

*Comment:* Family intimacies must never be shared with others—not even with parents. It is a great sin and a tragedy to break this God-given rule. A third person to sympathize or listen to complaints is a tool of the devil to estrange the hearts of husband and wife. Solve your home problems privately. No one else (except your minister or marriage counselor) should ever be involved. Always be truthful with each other, and never keep secrets from each other. Tell no jokes at the expense of your spouse's feelings.



Vigorously defend each other, and strictly exclude all intruders. And as for adultery (in spite of what some marriage counselors say), it always hurts you and everyone else involved. God, who knows our mind, body, and emotional structure (and knows what helps or hurts us) says, "Don't," we had better not. Those who ignore his rule will pay the supreme penalty. So if flirtations have begun, break them off at once, or shadows may settle over your life that cannot be lifted.

#### **10. God describes love; make it your daily goal to measure up.**

**"Love is forbearing and kind. Love knows no jealousy. Love does not brag; is not conceited. She is not unmannerly, nor selfish, nor irritable, nor mindful of wrongs. She does not rejoice in injustice, but joyfully sides with the truth. She can overlook faults. She is full of trust, full of hope, full of endurance." 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, Weymouth.**

*Comment:* Please reread the above Scripture passage carefully. This is God's true description of love. How do you measure up? Love is not a sentimental impulse, but a holy principle that involves every phase and action of life. With true love, your marriage cannot fail. Without it, it cannot succeed.

#### **11. Remember that criticism and nagging destroy love.**

**"Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them." Colossians 3:19. "It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry woman." Proverbs 21:19. "A continual dropping in a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike." Proverbs 27:15. "Why beholdest thou the mote [splinter] that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam [whole board] that is in thine own eye?" Matthew 7:3. "Love ...looks for a way of being constructive." 1 Corinthians 13:4, Phillips.**

*Comment:* Stop criticizing, nagging, and faultfinding. Your husband or wife may lack much, but nagging won't help. Don't expect perfection, or bitterness will result. Overlook faults, and hunt for the good things. Don't try to reform, control, or compel your partner—you will destroy love. Only God can change people. A sense of humor, a cheerful heart, kindness, patience, and affection will banish two-thirds of your marriage problems. Try to make your spouse happy rather than good, and the good will take care of itself. The secret of a successful marriage lies not in having the right partner, but rather in being the right partner.

#### **12. Do not overdo in anything; be temperate.**

**"Every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things." 1 Corinthians 9:25. "Love ...does not pursue selfish advantage." 1 Corinthians 13:5, Phillips. "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." 1 Corinthians 10:31. "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection." 1 Corinthians 9:27. "If any would not work, neither should he eat." 2 Thessalonians 3:10. "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled." Hebrews 13:4. "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin." Romans 6:12, 13.**



*Comment:* Overdoing will ruin your marriage. So will underdoing. Work, love, rest, exercise, play, worship, meals, and social contacts must be carefully balanced in your marriage, or something will snap. Overwork and the lack of sleep, proper food, or exercise make a person critical, intolerant, and negative. Constant overeating is a great evil that strengthens the lower nature and dulls the conscience. Sexual abuses destroy a love for holy things and weaken vitality. Marriage gives no license to sexual excesses. Degrading, twisted, or intemperate sex acts destroy love and respect for one another. A temperate sex life is recommended by the Bible (1 Corinthians 7:3-7). Social contracts with others are absolutely essential. True happiness cannot be found in isolation. We must learn to laugh and enjoy wholesome, good times. To be overly serious is dangerous. Overdoing or underdoing in anything weakens the mind, body, conscience, and the ability to love and respect one another. Don't let intemperance wreck your marriage.

### **13. Respect each other's personal rights and privacies.**

**"Love is forbearing. ...Love knows no jealousy. ... She is not unmannerly, nor selfish. ...She does not rejoice in injustice. ...She is full of trust." 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, Weymouth. "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another." Romans 12:10.**

*Comment:* Each spouse has a God-given right to certain personal privacies without explanation. Do not tamper with each other's wallets or purses, personal mail, and other private property unless given permission. The right to privacy and quietude when preoccupied should be respected. Your husband or wife even has a right to be wrong part of the time and is entitled to an "off-day" without being given the third degree. Marriage partners do not own each other and should never try to force personality changes. Only God can make such changes, and we shall all answer personally to Him on this matter (Romans 14:12). Perfect confidence and trust in one another—no checking up on each other—is absolutely essential for happiness. Spend less time trying to "figure out" your spouse and more time trying to please her or him. This works wonders.

### **14. Be clean, modest, orderly, and dutiful.**

**"In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel." 1 Timothy 2:9. "She ...works with willing hands." "She rises while it is yet night and provides food for her household." "She looks well to the ways of her household, and does not eat the bread of idleness." Proverbs 31:13, 15, 27, RSV. "Be ye clean." Isaiah 52:11. "Let all things be done decently and in order." 1 Corinthians 14:40. "If any provide not ...for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." 1 Timothy 5:8. "Be not slothful." Hebrews 6:12.**

*Comment:* Laziness, disorder, dirt, and slovenliness are the devil's weapons to destroy your respect and affection for one another, and thus ruin your marriage. Neat, modest attire and clean, well-groomed bodies are essential for both husband and wife. The meals should be wholesome, attractive, and served on time. The home should be clean and orderly, because this brings peace, clamness, and satisfaction to all. A lazy, shiftless husband who does not provide for household is a curse to his family and an insult to God.



Carelessness in some of these seemingly small matters is destroying homes by the thousands.

### **15. Determine to speak softly and kindly.**

**“A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.” Proverbs 15:1. “Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest.” Ecclesiastes 9:9. “When I became a man, I put away childish things.” 1 Corinthians 13:11.**

*Comment:* Force yourself to speak softly and kindly to your spouse. Silence, when one is attacked, is often the best method to cool wrath. Decisions made when angry, tired, or discouraged are unreliable anyway, so it's best to relax and let anger cool. And when you do speak, let it always be quietly and lovingly. Harsh, angry words crush your spouse's desire to please you.

### **16. Be reasonable in money matters.**

**“It [love] is not possessive. ...Love has good manners and does not pursue selfish advantage.” 1 Corinthians 13:4, 5, Phillips. “God loveth a cheerful giver.” 2 Corinthians 9:7.**

*Comment:* All possessions and income in marriage should be “ours,” not “yours” and “mine.” Wives who don't work outside the home should receive a regular amount for groceries, clothing, and other budgeted items. It should be cheerfully provided instead of grudgingly released under protest. Wife and husband both should have small, equal sums (whenever possible) to spend as desired without giving account. A miserly husband usually angers his wife into being a spender, just as a wasteful husband makes a wife stingy. Showing confidence in your companion's managing ability will usually make him or her more businesslike.

### **17. Talk things over and counsel together freely.**

**“It [love] is neither anxious to impress nor does it cherish inflated ideas of its own importance. ...It is not touchy.” 1 Corinthians 13:4, 5, Phillips. “He that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul.” Proverbs 15:32. “Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? There is more hope of a fool than of him.” Proverbs 26:12.**

*Comment:* Few things will strengthen your marriage more than counseling together on all major decisions. Changing a job or purchasing a home, an automobile, a boat, furniture, clothing (major items at least), and all other items that require money involve both husband and wife, and the opinions of both should be considered. Talking things over together will avoid many blunders that could ruin your marriage. If, after much discussion and earnest prayer, opinions still differ, the wife should submit to her husband's decision. Scripture is clear on this. (See Ephesians 5:22-24)