

It Is Not Good That the Man Should Be Alone

*This study is dedicated to my wife Hannah,
the woman God gave me to love and care for.*

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
What are Victorian Ethics?	2
The Purpose of Marriage for God	6
The Purpose of Marriage for Both Spouses	6
How to Prepare Children for Marriage	8
How to Succeed in Your Marriage	13
Conclusion	17
Appendix I - The Weaker Vessel	18
Appendix II - Family Structure	19
Appendix III - What is a Marriage?	23
Works Cited	25
End Notes:	25

Introduction

After twenty eight years of marriage, this is a collection of my best ideas and the best advice I have received. May this study challenge you to walk closer with our Lord and if you are married, or ever plan to be, to be a better spouse.

After spending the summer at [Summit Ministries](#) , my oldest daughter posed a question to me, "what is Marriage?" More recently, I was working with a struggling teenager who was suffering from a guilty conscience because he was starting to notice girls. He felt that this was the unpardonable sin.

These questions opened the door for other ones. For instance, what are Victorian ethics? And are they the same thing as Christian ethics? I still do not know the answer to this question.¹ Of

course, no study on marriage would be complete without advice on how to prepare our children for a successful marriage, and giving the husbands and wives tips on how to have a better marriage.

What are Victorian Ethics?

Since Victorian Ethics paved the way for our modern worldview, and is a worldview that colors our own perception of right and wrong, this is a good place to start. Two thoughts have held my curiosity for a while. First, what are Victorian Ethics? Second, is there a significant distinction between Victorian ethics and Christian ethics? If so, have we unknowingly replaced our Christian ethics with Victorian ones?

These questions are not easy to answer, since most critics of Victorian ethics have also discarded Christian ethics as archaic. The truth is, in the Victorian era² different people held to different types of morality, making the age a hard one to label.

Even so, these are not idle questions; I am leading up to a few even harder ones that I think we should answer. For instance, is it wrong to think about sex? Why do many unbelievers assume that Christians are opposed to sex, or believe that sex is dirty? I actually know some Christians who do believe that sexual thoughts are taboo. Some women dress in plain, colorless, shapeless garb for this reason. Surely it is wrong for us men to have fantasies involving fornication. However, where do we draw the line?



Recently we were working with a young man who was going through some major struggles in his life. When we started counseling him, he was very confused. He had not slept without nightmares in about two weeks. It seems that he felt condemned to eternal torment because he could not get rid of sinful thoughts about girls. His parents had raised him with a very strict Christian upbringing, in fact, they were so strict, they taught their sons that it was wrong for them to even think about girls.

Reflecting on this, I remembered that another very important man in history went through the same struggles. His name was Alfred Kinsey. According to his biographer,³ Alfred Kinsey's parents raised him in a strict Christian home. Even so, he went through the struggles normal to boys while he was growing up. Like many others, he became frustrated, being too ashamed to discuss them. Finally, in open rebellion against God, he became a homosexual and as the author of *Sexual Behavior in the Human*

Male single handedly did more to legitimize homosexuality and start the sexual revolution in the late 1950s than any other single individual. As a young man, he feared God; as an older adult, he made open war against him. What went wrong?

Actually many things went wrong in Alfred Kinsey's life. One of them, the one that we will look at, is the belief that Christians think sex is dirty; in fact, some may be offended in this paper for questioning that thought. Should we as Christians teach that sex is dirty and that even discussing it defiles us? Jesus taught:

*For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.
- Matthew 15:19-20*

In these verses, Jesus answers the question for our thoughts about adultery or fornication. However, what if I notice that a woman is beautiful, without desiring to commit adultery? Or, what if I just notice that a woman is ... well a woman.

If you expect me to start quoting from the Song of Solomon at this point, you will be disappointed. Rather I will look at an account from the life of Jesus.

And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment. - Luke 7:37-38

To be honest, if a woman came up to me, whether I was at some religious person's house or not, and out of gratitude started to behave the way she did, I would feel guilty. Why? Am I offended because of my Christian worldview, or because of my Victorian Ethics? Jesus would not have allowed her intimate behavior if it were sinful for him to do so. In another incident when Jesus was teaching:

And it came to pass, as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked. But he said, Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it. - Luke 11:27-28

How long could I talk like this at a religious gathering before the elders suggested that instead of being so explicit, I should simply say something like, "blessed is your mother." Yet Jesus did not correct her for her speech, rather he followed up on her point.

Here is the problem. To teach our sons that it is a sin to notice girls may work while he is a child; however, when he suddenly becomes a young man he will not be able help that he is in a man's body. If he believes that his new feelings are sinful, he may be too ashamed to talk about them, but that will not change his feelings. If he is too ashamed to talk of his feelings, his parents may not see the real problem at a time when their young man needs guidance .

Is it a sin for a young man to notice that a female is female or to notice an attractive girl? Many believe that the answer is yes, or else why did Jesus say:

*Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.
- Matthew 5:27-28*

Christians often quote this verse to suggest that whoever looks on a woman has committed adultery in his heart. Bear with me for a moment, though, as I walk across thin ice and suggest that we may be misunderstanding this verse.

First, when Jesus says *commits adultery*, He is talking about desiring a married woman. In fact the Greek word translated woman is γυνή (pronounced goo-nay'). This word is also translated *wife* and is the only word that is translated *wife* in the New Testament. We all agree it is wrong to covet another man's wife.

The reason I am willing to walk on thin ice is that I believe every young man who asks a woman to marry him desires her. This does not mean that he has committed adultery in his heart. In fact, I would not want a young man to marry my daughter if he did not have any desire for her, would you?

The problem is we have taken the words your neighbor's out of, "Don't covet your neighbor's wife", and replaced them with the words a wife. We have also taken the words worldly and evil out of the following verses:

Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; - Titus 2:12

AND

Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. - 1 Corinthians 10:6

The word lust in the above Scriptures is ἐπιθυμία, which is also translated as desire. Take, for example, Luke 22:15.

*And [Jesus] said unto them, With **desire** I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: - Luke 22:15*

Titus 2:12 and 1 Corinthians 10:6 are not cautioning us to have no desires, but to not desire evil or worldly things. Have our Victorian ethics caused us to believe that all desire is evil?

But are there not other verses that say not to look on a woman? What about Job? Is there not a verse in the book of Job that says we should not look on a young maid?

*I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?
- Job 31:1*

The issue again is adultery; Job was married. Even more important is that Job did not state that it was a sin to see a girl; he was concerned with his thoughts. The reason we know it was not a sin for Job to notice that girls were pretty, is because at the end of his book, the author (can we assume that it was Job?) notes the beauty of Job's daughters. He would not have noted that if it were a sin.

*And in all the land were no women found so fair as the daughters of Job:
and their father gave them inheritance among their brethren. - Job 42:15*

The best evidence that feminine beauty is not a taboo subject is that God uses a woman's beauty to describe his love for his people.

I have caused thee to multiply as the bud of the field, and thou hast increased and waxen great, and thou art come to excellent ornaments: thy breasts are fashioned, and thine hair is grown, whereas thou wast naked and bare. Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine. Then washed I thee with water; yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with oil. I clothed thee also with embroidered work, and shod thee with badgers' skin, and I girded thee about with fine linen, and I covered thee with silk. I decked thee also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thy hands, and a chain on thy neck. And I put a jewel on thy forehead, and earrings in thine ears, and a beautiful crown upon thine head. Thus wast thou decked with gold and silver; and thy raiment was of fine linen, and silk, and embroidered work; thou didst eat fine flour, and honey, and oil: and thou wast exceeding beautiful, and thou didst prosper into a kingdom. And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it was perfect through my comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord GOD. - Ezekiel 16:7-14⁴



If you need more proof, read the Song of Solomon. The reason this is important is that ignoring our sexuality does not work. For example, the press has given much coverage to Roman Catholic priests who broke their vows of chastity. If the Roman Catholic Church had followed the Apostle Paul's advice, many of their scandals would not have happened.

Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. - 1 Corinthians 7:2

Conclusion

Though I failed to define Victorian Ethics, I have made a case for removing the taboo of noticing our sexuality and having feelings. Rather, as Jesus taught, let us make fornication and adultery the taboo. God made all life *male and female*.⁵ Let our young men enjoy being men and the young women enjoy, well... being young. Instead of prohibiting discussion, we should be guiding our young adults on the narrow path until they have more experience being adults.

The Purpose of Marriage for God

The same God who made us male and female also gave us the institution of marriage. Why? First, God said plainly to the prophet Malachi that he instituted marriage so that he could have godly children.

*And did not [God] make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? **That he might seek a godly seed.** Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth.
- Malachi 2:15*

God implied that marriage is required in order to have godly children when He said to the prophet Hosea:

And I will not have mercy upon her children; for they be the children of whoredoms. - Hosea 2:4

We see in our country an epidemic of divorce and fornication, with parents disregarding the fact that children raised without the benefit of married parents have many disadvantages in life. It may not seem fair to punish children for their adulterous parents, but the truth is, if we do not respect God's wishes in this matter, our children will pay the price with lower grades, poor social skills and more jail time.¹⁰

The second reason God instituted marriage, is that he delights in our pleasure. Later in the book of Hosea, he compares the relationship between God and his people to marriage.

And it shall be at that day, saith the LORD, that thou shalt call me Ishi [your husband]; and shalt call me no more Baali [lord or master].

[...]

And I will betroth thee unto me forever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the LORD. - Hosea 2:16, 19-20

I have tried to dispel the myth that God did not intend Christians to be sexual creatures. If we avoid fornication and adultery, we have nothing of which to be ashamed.

Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge. - Hebrews 13:4

The Purpose of Marriage for Both Spouses

First to Avoid Fornication

One of the main reasons for marriage is to avoid fornication. In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul gave no other reason.

Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. - 1 Corinthians 7:2

The marital relationship is to be romantic, even sexy. The Song of Solomon is a portion of scripture that God gave us, to show us what a healthy marriage looks like.

*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:
- 2 Timothy 3:16*

Second, for Companionship

And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him. - Genesis 2:18

From the very beginning, God saw the need for companionship. This companionship is naturally fulfilled in marriage. Men, this means that you shouldn't get married unless you're willing to stay home in the evenings to keep your wife company.

Third, for Provision for the Wife

The woman should expect to be provided for in a marital relationship.

*But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.
- 1 Timothy 5:8*

In ancient Israel, if a woman's husband died, and if she had no children, she could expect her husband's brother to marry and provide for her.

*If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and **take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of a husband's brother unto her.** And it shall be, that the firstborn which she beareth shall succeed in the name of his brother which is dead, that his name be not put out of Israel.*

And if the man like not to take his brother's wife, then let his brother's wife go up to the gate unto the elders, and say, My husband's brother refuseth to raise up unto his brother a name in Israel, he will not perform the duty of my husband's brother. Then the elders of his city shall call him, and speak unto him: and if he stand to it, and say, I like not to take her;

Then shall his brother's wife come unto him in the presence of the elders, and loose his shoe from off his foot, and spit in his face, and shall answer and say, So shall it be done unto that man that will not build up his brother's house. - Deuteronomy 25:5-9

God expects the husband to provide for his wife, and then, in her later years, that responsibility is to be passed on to her children. Some may take issue with Moses' method of provision, but this provision kept the family together. Today's solution breaks up the family unit, with the Federal

Government and the Social Security Administration usurping the husband's responsibility. Social workers often counsel pregnant girls not to marry because they will lose welfare benefits.

Fourth, for Protection for the Wife

When Herod went after Jesus, the angel did not appear to Mary, but to Joseph. The angel told him of Herod's plans, giving him instructions on how to protect his family (Matthew chapter two).

God gives the man the responsibility to protect and care for his wife.

Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered. - 1 Peter 3:7

In Appendix I there are more details why men must protect their wives as the weaker vessel.

Fifth, To Make the House a Home for the Man

The woman role is to nurture her young children and to care for the home.

*The aged women likewise, that they be in behavior as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, **keepers at home**, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.
- Titus 2:3-5*

While being “keepers at home” does not mean that a wife has no place in the work place ¹¹, it does mean that her primary responsibility is in the care of young children and the home, just as her husband's primary responsibility in marriage is provision and protection.

How to Prepare Children for Marriage

Resolve Annoying Habits Before You Wed

Ask anybody who is married; you will not change your future spouse. However, you can change yourself for your spouse. If you want a marriage made in heaven, develop good habits now. Why should God give you a perfect spouse if you are not worthy and growing spiritually?

House and riches are the inheritance of fathers: and a prudent wife is from the LORD. - Proverbs 19:14

Keep Yourselves Pure.

The advice to keep yourself pure goes for boys as well as girls. God does not have a double standard. In fact, since sexual temptations are stronger for boys, they need to have more determination for victory.

For the girls, if a boyfriend tries to test your love with the words, “If you love me, you would ...” and then he asks you to fornicate with him, your response should be, “If you loved me, you would not ask”. If he threatens to leave you when you will not put out, show him the door and

then thank God that he is leaving now, not abandoning you later, after cheating on you and taking you away from your family.

Our cultural engineers may teach that jealousy is a sin, but they are mistaken. Jealousy only causes suffering when a spouse does not trust their partner. A spouse's lack of trust may be from either their partner's unfaithfulness, or the result of their own unfaithfulness. But Jealousy is good, when both partners love and trust each other. Even our perfect God is jealous.

For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God: - Exodus 34:14

The word jealous means to have strong feelings for or against the person of your desires. If your spouse loves you, and you are unfaithful, they will have strong and bad feelings. But if you are in a faithful relationship with someone who loves you, that special someone will have strong and pleasant feelings toward you.

Let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O LORD, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God? Then will the LORD be jealous for his land, and pity his people. - Joel 2:17-18

Do Girls Need a Dress Code?

Some Christians have very strict dress codes. I heard of one Amish community where it is a sin for a girl's skirt to be over eight inches from the floor. Seven point five inches is okay, but if your skirt is eight and a quarter inches from the floor, you have strayed from the narrow path.

If you think a dress code is like drawing a line and then seeing how close you can get without crossing, you have missed the point. Do not draw a line; rather, before you pick out your wardrobe, try to understand how a guy thinks. If you want to help us keep our thoughts pure, do not accentuate or draw attention to your private parts. You can make your body attractive, but if you are looking for a man who wants to be faithful, he will also be looking for a woman who is not trying to get every other man's attention.

In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness [modesty and reverence] and sobriety; not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array. But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works. - 1 Timothy 2:9-10

Girls, Should You Play Hard to Get?

The answer is yes. When a girl chases a boy, it scares him off (I don't know why, but we are afraid of girls who chase us because it makes us think that there is something wrong with her). While a boy may use a forward girl, this is not what we desire in lifelong a companion. While contemporary social engineers may disagree, I think that history will bear me out when I say that it is the boy who is supposed to pursue the girl.

If the girl should play hard to get, how hard should she play? This is hard to answer, as there are few good role models. There is a book series, Anne of Green Gables, popular with young girls. In this book, our heroine Anne is always being rude or angry to the boy, Gill. They meet, she

treats him rudely, he eats it up until end of story when they marry. In real life, Gill would have left Anne after ten years of abuse and happily married someone else. Playing hard to get does not mean that you should be rude.

If the boy is shy or clumsy, he probably has little or no experience courting women; this is okay. Do you want a man who has had a lot of experience with other women? If the boy is shy, you may need to encourage him without chasing him. If he is trying to get up the courage to talk, maybe you could make eye contact (for more advice on how to capture a man, talk to your father).

A Note on Being Pursued by a Man

While it is normal for a man to pursue (court) a woman, in today's post-Christian era, women have to be careful of men stalking them. Occasionally the methods used by these men may seem similar to courting; therefore, you should know the character of a man before you give your heart to him.

While there appear to be similarities (they have similar goals) between a future husband pursuing a wife and a stalker pursuing a victim, there are many differences.

The following list, from *The Gift of Fear* by Gavin de Becker, warns us of the techniques used by a stalker.

1. **FORCED TEAMING:** For instance, by using the word *we*, a stalker is trying to establish premature trust. Sharing a genuine predicament, like being stuck in a stalled elevator, will understandably create a 'we' attitude. But forced teaming is not a coincidence; it is intentional and is hard to rebuff without feeling rude.

2. **TYPECASTING:** A girl will feel pressured to engage in conversation, in order to prove that she is not snobbish. For example the stalker will try to make her respond by saying something like, "You are probably stuck-up to talk to me." The stalker doesn't really care whether she's snobbish or not; he's just trying to get her to interact with him. In one letter to my daughter, a pursuer said, in reference to her not responding to his emails,

“...Only a rude person with no consideration in their heart would think like that.”

3. **CHARM AND NICENESS:** While we all want a charming spouse, charm is an overrated ability. Quoting Mr. de Becker:

"Note that I called it an ability, not an inherent feature of one's personality. Charm is almost always a directed instrument, which, like rapport building, has motive. To charm is to compel, to control by allure or attraction. Think of charm as a verb, not a trait. If you consciously tell yourself, "This person is trying to charm me," as opposed to "This person is charming," you'll be able to see around it."

4. **DISCOUNTING THE WORD "NO":** If a man cares about a girl's feelings, she will not have to repeat herself. When a girl does not respond to a stalker, he will take that as a yes. Women do not have to talk to strangers, especially if they are uncomfortable doing so. The man pursuing my daughter said in another email:

"SO you can speak, you can not speak. But isn't silence still a form of speaking? And what would you draw from that?"

When a woman does not talk to a stranger, if the stranger has good intentions, he will take no answer as a no.

Learning About a Person's Character

A century ago, families were not very mobile; they stayed in the neighborhood for a long time, so everyone knew each other. A girl not only knew the character of the person interested in her, she also knew his whole family. Today it is much different, so how does a girl learn about a man's character? Here are two ideas:

The first way is to be involved in group activities, and watch how he plays games. You'll be able to see his character by whether or not he is a good sport and a good loser.

The second way is to watch how he treats his parents. How does he treat his mother? Do you want to be treated the way he treats her? Boys, how does she relate to her father? Does she respect him?

Before you take serious interest in a potential mate, ask yourself whether you like his/her parents. The truth is we are a lot more like our parents than most of us realize. Not only are the little bad habits passed along, but even the worst traits like alcoholism are, unfortunately, often passed on generationally. Keep in mind, it is far more difficult to see bad habits in the guy you have a crush on, than it is to see them in his parents.

Get Your Finances in Order

The number one cause for marital struggles is money, or the lack of it. I could whine and complain about how fiscal irresponsibility ruins a marriage, but if you are fiscally irresponsible your spouse will do that for me. Solomon taught that:

The borrower is servant to the lender. - Proverbs 22:7b

And Jesus said that we cannot serve two masters.

*No man can serve two masters: ... Ye cannot serve God and mammon.
- Matthew 6:24a, 24c*

Therefore, you will not be able to serve the Lord faithfully if you are fiscally irresponsible. Jesus also said:

*If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will
commit to your trust the true riches? - Luke 16:11*

Not only will you be unable to serve the Lord, you will also have an unhappy marriage.

Look in the Right Places

In our secular culture, many young people are looking for partners in places like singles bars. And we wonder why the divorce rate is so high.⁷ If you want someone with a substance abuse problem, then look for your future spouse in the places where people with substance abuse problems hang out.

Christians have an alternative in their church's youth group; however, be careful. Some youth groups are not much different than a singles bar, excepting maybe there is less alcohol. If keeping oneself pure is not an outspoken goal of the group, then find another group.

Do you want to marry someone who serves Jesus? Then get out and serve Jesus yourself; at least you will be looking in the right place.

Girls, do not go Steady With a Boyfriend

More specifically, do not go steady with a boyfriend if you do not intend to marry him. God could bring Mr. Right along, but he will walk past you if you are attached to someone else.

Boys, Treat Girls as you Wish Others to Treat Your Future Wife

Men when you sleep with a girl, you make her a less desirable mate. God will hold those who do so accountable for their actions.

*Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? **Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, - 1 Corinthians 6:9***

How do you treat your sister? Let me rephrase that; how does Jesus want you to treat your sister? If you are going to be married someday, many other people are interacting with your future wife today. In the same way, when you interact with a girl, you are interacting with another man's future wife. Jesus said:

*And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.
- Luke 6:31*

If you believe that your future wife's present unfaithfulness will not upset you, either you are mistaken now or you will not love her then. More important, even if you do not believe or understand how fornication is wrong, God will hold all fornicators accountable. Just because nobody else you know is keeping himself or herself pure before marriage is no excuse; do not use the world for your role model. Speaking of God's judgments at the end of the world, Peter said:

Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.

For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you: Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead. - 1 Peter 4:1-5

Boys, it is okay to notice girls; a fast heartbeat is okay, however do not allow yourself to indulge in thoughts of fornication (you can control your thoughts and imaginations). If the girl is not yours (your wife), then she is not yours to fantasize about.

Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; - 2 Corinthians 10:5

Boys, Prepare a Home

By preparing a home, I mean more. You must prepare for the future. I know a man who believes that God promised him a certain girl for his wife eleven years ago. While he insists that the marriage will happen (causing much grief to both the young lady and her father), this man has done nothing in eleven years to prepare for her future.

I myself also failed to prepare for the future before I married my wife (no home, no career, no vision). I could have easily saved up for a down payment on a house before my wedding day; failing to do so, I took many years (it was hard work to save while providing for my family) and a lot of overtime before we finally owned our own home.

Drink waters out of thine own cistern, and running waters out of thine own well. Let thy fountains be dispersed abroad, and rivers of waters in the streets. Let them be only thine own, and not strangers' with thee.
- Proverbs 5:15-17

Resolve Important Expectations Before You Wed

In addition to developing your own character, there may be something important that you want in your future spouse. Do you want to home school your children? Do you want to live somewhere or not live somewhere? It is important to resolve any important issues before your wedding day. If your fiancée is opposed to something that is important to you, do not expect your future spouse to feel any differently about it later. Being afraid to discuss some topics before you wed, thinking that you will just convert your spouse later, should be a red flag and may be bordering on dishonesty.

How to Succeed in Your Marriage

No reflection on marriage would be complete without revealing at least some of the secrets to success and how to behave after you are married.

Secret 1 - There Must be no Expectations

You must understand the difference between desires and expectations⁹. Before we marry, we have many desires. If this were not so, there would be no wedding. Unfortunately, after the wedding many of our desires turn into expectations. For instance, before you marry, you may look forward to your wife preparing your dinner. After you are married, you expect it.

The problem is, when our spouses do only what we expect of them, we are not thankful. They only did what was expected. Even Jesus said:

Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do. - Luke 17:9-10

However, when our spouses fulfill our *unexpected* desires (of their own free will) we are happy, even thankful. While we should be willing to do what is expected, without thanks, being grateful for everything your spouse does will encourage your spouse and make being married to you a much more pleasant experience.

Secret 2 - No Give and Take

If you want to succeed in your marriage, understand it is not a 50-50 or 'give and take'. You must give 100%. (While remembering that you are expecting nothing from your spouse)

For husbands, this means loving your wives.

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; - Ephesians 5:25

Using Christ as an example, He loved and gave Himself for the church while members of that very church were crucifying Him (Acts 2:36-37) . Even the leaders whom He appointed for the church fled, one denying with oaths that he knew Him (Matt 26:73-74) . When Paul said that Jesus gave himself for the church, several pages of graphic words could not convey all that this means. This is our goal; this is what we are to strive for in loving our wives. Even when (especially when) she is not being responsive.

But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. - Matthew 5:44-45

If we are to love our enemies, how much more should we love our wives!

For wives, giving 100% means reverencing your husbands.

*Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; **and the wife see that she reverence her husband.***
- Ephesians 5:33

In many cultures a woman's husband was (and in some cultures still is), picked for her. I suppose that on occasion this could cause some bitterness or unforgiveness. In our culture, most marry because they have fallen in love. When this crush wears off, the couple is often disillusioned by each other. This is when Paul's command that a wife *reverence her husband* becomes necessary.

In order for a couple to fulfill God's plan for their lives, the wife must get behind her husband. You have heard the saying "Behind every great man there is a great woman". While men can do great things while going solo, very few have accomplished any great goal with the help of a nagging or disrespectful wife.

A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband: but she that maketh ashamed is as rottenness in his bones. - Proverbs 12:4

Secret 3 - Do All in the Name of the Lord Jesus

It may sound crazy to expect nothing from your spouse, while at the same time giving 100%.

Sometimes it may be hard to give 100%, especially when a spouse is not living up to their side of the bargain (his or her marital vows), or when they are not thankful for our acts of kindness, or are not willing to give anything. We can find the strength to fulfill our commitment to love by

remembering that what we do, we do as unto the Lord. As Christians, we know that the Lord is worthy of all our good behavior.

And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him. - Colossians 3:17

AND

If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother [or sister], he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother [or sister] whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? - 1 John 4:20

AND

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. - Romans 12:1

In time you spouse will respond. However, even if takes a while or your spouse never does respond, this will be a special time for you as you become closer and closer to the Lord, learning to rely on him.

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: - 1 Peter 5:6

For those who are going to try this advice, do not give up after one or two attempts. It takes a while to break bad habits, and it may take a while for your spouse to respond. When you are struggling, remember that "whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus".

Secret 4 - Understand That Men and Women Think Differently

Paul warned that there would be some tribulation in marriage.

But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you. - 1 Corinthians 7:28

If we understood that men and women think differently, many of our troubles would be softened, and some even eliminated. If we understood these differences, we could stop taking personal offence at some of our spouses' behavior. The following example comes from *His Brain, Her Brain*.

"Our garbage is collected on Tuesday mornings. There is a set of statements I could use every Monday evening. This list moves from indirect (more likely to be used by and understood by me) to direct (more likely to be used by and understood by Walt). Perhaps you will hear echoes of conversations that take place in your home:

'Do you feel like taking the garbage out tonight?

'Wouldn't it be good if the garbage was taken out this evening?

'Do you think the garbage should be taken out?

'Would you please take the garbage out?

'Will you take the garbage out?

'Take the garbage out now!

"Walt could literally answer 'yes' to each of the three first statements and still not move or take the garbage out-even though he's usually happy to do this for me. [...] I can choose to get mad or irritated, I can choose to nag, or I can choose to communicate in a way that he can hear what I mean. To me, it's easiest simply to use more direct language with him." (Walt Larimore, MD and Barb Larimore, 2008)

While I do not agree with the author's views on psychology, my wife and I have concurred in our own lives with the results of many of their studies. My wife used to get irritated when she had to ask me several times to do a favor. I would get irritated because she did not ask me plainly the first three times, but only gave, what I realized later were, subtle hints.

There are many other ways in which the husband and wife are different. For instance, a wife will take longer to preheat in the bedroom. Just watching his wife undress can excite a husband enough that he is ready to go, when after the same act of undressing, she is ready to go...to sleep.

It is no surprise that our wives also need more communication in a relationship than their husbands do. However, women do not desire this communication to seek a solution, as men do. At the end of a long day, your wife may share her struggles; this is so that you will understand her and become closer to her, as her husband. At these times, she does not want your advice on how to run her schedule.

It is during these times that my wife and I have to consciously remember that the other one is not deliberately trying to be annoying; rather, to our surprise, I think like a man, and my wife thinks like a woman.

Secret 5 - Have Accountability Partners

In this present age, the internet brings pornography into our homes with so little effort. We men must be vigilant to protect our minds from this addiction. Starting a small accountability group is helpful. A combination of knowing that we will have to tell the truth and knowing that we will share our struggles at the next meeting will help us to control our thoughts.

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. - 1 John 1:8-9

If a woman is in an accountability group, she has to remember that it is not a gossip session. She is there for her own accountability, not to recount her husband's faults so that her group can pray for him.

The aged women likewise, that they be in behavior as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to

*love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.
- Titus 2:3-5*

Secret 6 - Know That You Married the Right Person

If you allow yourself to believe that you married the wrong person, this belief will affect the way that you treat your spouse. While your marriage may not be what you expected, the fact is that it was God who bought you and your spouse together.

*Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore **God hath joined together**, let not man put asunder. - Matthew 19:6*

Understanding this helped me with my attitude toward my own wife; I do not want to explain to God how he made a mistake and gave me the wrong spouse. The way for us to behave is to believe that we married the spouse God meant for us to marry. Not only does this changed attitude help us become closer in our marriage, it is far wiser to fit ourselves into God's perfect will now, than to try to explain to God that He made a mistake on the Day of Judgment.

Conclusion

One does not need to have a study on marriage in order to see that it is a good thing. However, one does need to study in order to make their marriage a good thing. The sooner and more willing one is to learn and to put into place what they have learned (true love), the more exciting and satisfying their marriage will be.

But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed. - James 1:25

Since I have suggested some new ideas in this study, I would appreciate any helpful criticism. I hope that what I have written will help you to be a better spouse, and that we may glorify the Lord with our thoughts, in our behavior, and in our marriages.

Author, [Jeff Barnes](#) .

Appendix I - The Weaker Vessel

It is important for Christians to understand that women are not the same as men, and that they are the weaker vessel.

Our culture may be in denial, viewing men and women identically. However, if we do not recognize our differences, we will not properly influence our culture or lives as God would have us, through marriage. With these goals in mind, let us see why the wife is the weaker vessel.

*[In answer to God saying he had no regard for their offerings.] Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. **Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth.** - Malachi 2:14-15*

In that passage, Malachi's remark seems sexist. Why doesn't he also warn women to not deal treacherously with their husbands? It is because the woman is the weaker vessel. Here are three examples:

Wives are Subject to Their Husbands

*Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and **he shall rule over thee.** - Genesis 3:16*

While this passage of scripture may inflame feminists, they should think about what they are doing. Name any non-Christian country where the women are treated better than in a Christian one. If you look at the statistics on The National Organization for Women's website, you will see that we treated our women much better when we were a Christian country than we do now. Speaking to any feminists reading this: would you rather live in a Muslim country? Do the Hindus treat their women as equals with men? Is life better in a communist country? The fact is that, while Christians teach that wives are to be submissive to their own husbands, it is only in a Christian country where women even have the freedom to be feminist.

Women are Physically Weaker

Being physically weaker puts women at a disadvantage.

The following hypothetical discussion, where the man will not take no for an answer, is from *The Gift of fear*:⁸

Man: What a [brat]. What's your problem, lady? I was just trying to offer a little help to a pretty woman. What are you so paranoid about?

Woman: You're right. I shouldn't be wary. I'm overreacting about nothing. I mean, just because a man makes an unsolicited and persistent approach in an underground parking lot in a society where **crimes against women have risen four times faster than the general crime rate**, and **three out of four women will suffer a violent crime**; and just because I've personally heard horror stories from every female friend I've ever had; and just because I have to consider where

I park, where I walk, whom I talk to, and whom I date in the context of whether someone will kill me or rape me or scare me half to death; and just because several times a week someone makes an inappropriate remark, stares at me, harasses me, follows me, or drives alongside my car pacing me; and just because I have to deal with the apartment manager who gives me the creeps for reasons I haven't figured out, yet I can tell by the way he looks at me that given an opportunity he'd do something that would get us both on the evening news; and just because **these are life-and-death issues most men know nothing about so that I'm made to feel foolish for being cautious** even though I live at the center of a swirl of possible hazards doesn't mean a woman should be wary of a stranger who **ignores the word "no."** (de Becker, 1997)

This reminds me of Sodom and Gomorrah (we all remember what happened there). Because women are physically weaker, God expects men to assist them, not abuse them.

Women are the Loser in a Divorce

In divorce, the wife ends up on short end of the stick. The following quotes are from www.divorcereform.org. Each quote was from a different study:

"One such study, conducted by Saul Hoffman and Greg Duncan, measured a decline of 30 percent [in their standard of living] for divorced women during the first year after divorce."

"Ten percent of the nation's families are headed only by a woman, but 40 percent of the families classified as poor have female heads."

"Single women are 5 times more likely to be poor than their married sisters."

"Single mothers are nine times more likely to live in deep poverty than the married family, with incomes less than half of the official poverty line."
(Americans for Divorce Reform Inc.)

The bottom-line is that it is no wonder Malachi gave us men such a strong admonition:

Take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. - Malachi 2:15b

Appendix II - Family Structure

Since boy-girl relationships eventually lead to larger family relationships, family structure should also be a part of this study. Therefore, we will look at the patriarchal family, the Christian family, and the modern family.

A Patriarchal Family

A patriarchal family is one in which children, even as adults, are obedient to (that is, their lives are run by) their natural fathers. Believe it or not, patriarchal families are not indorsed by scripture.

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

The main example I have seen used to indorse patriarchal families is in Genesis, where we see Jacob still controlling his adult children, even ordering them to get food from Egypt. While this is a true account of Jacob's life, that does not mean that God indorsed his or his children's behavior at this time. If you are familiar Genesis, you know many examples where God was not pleased with the Children of Jacob.

The problem with patriarchal families today is that wives are often expected to not only obey their own husbands, but their husband's father and mother as well.¹² There is no scriptural injunction to support this. In Genesis 2:24 God said, "*Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother*". While our sons should watch out for us in our old age, once they are adults they have *Jesus Christ as their head*, not their earthly fathers.

In patriarchal families, children often become the adult servants of their parents. When an adult child does leave his parents' home, his guilt may make him feel like he has left the narrow path, leading to future problems.

As an interesting side note, pagan Rome had very strong patriarchal families, with the father having even more control over their adult children than most patriarchal fathers desire today.

While our modern times have seen a breakup of the family structure, some have overreacted by going too far the other way. The best response may be for the head of the household to see himself as a servant rather than as the lord of his house.

Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. - John 13:13-15

A Christian Family

Now let us look at the different members of a Christian family. Do not look at these classifications legalistically; rather, use them as food for thought.

Jesus Christ: Jesus Christ is head of the Christian family. His relationship to His church is a role model for the family and for fathers in particular.

Grandparents: You have a place of honor. They should be able to teach the children and pass down the wisdom and family history acquired in their lifetimes. Though they should have a preeminent place in the home, they get older they turn over leadership responsibilities to their adult children.

[Jesus is speaking against the Jew's traditions:] For Moses said, Honor thy father and thy mother; and, whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death: But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free. And ye suffer him no more to do aught for his father or his mother; - Mark 7:10-12

Jesus was angry because grown children did not take care of their aging parents. He was not criticizing the Jews for not allowing the grandparents to be the heads of their homes.

Husbands: You are to be the head of their families. At the same time they are to be submissive to Christ.

*But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.
- 1 Corinthians 11:3*

Husbands are also called to love their wives as Jesus loves his church.

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it. - Ephesians 5:25

This means that the husband does not make decisions for his own pleasure; rather, he makes them for the best interest of his family. While his wife is to submit to him, this is not just for his pleasure; it is so he can be a more effective leader and more effective in his service to Jesus.

Wives: Wives are to submit to their own husbands. Some church leaders believe that women in general, are to be submissive to men in general. This is not so, Jesus said nobody can serve two masters (Matthew 6:24). This means that a man's wife is not submissive to any other man.

A wife may even run her own business outside the home.¹¹ It should be obvious that in a business deal like buying a vineyard (Proverbs 31:16), to be successful she would have to be on equal footing with those she is transacting business. While a wife can run her own business, she can run into problems when she works as an employee outside the home - no one can serve two masters.

Finally, the wife is not even required to submit to the pastor. If a pastor were to have a problem with someone's wife (or children), he should approach the husband (or father). Even for theological questions one's wife should not ask the pastor; rather, as Paul said:

*And if [the wives] will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.
- 1 Corinthians 14:35*

The Christian couples who follow Paul's advice on marriage will have far more unity and contentment in their marriage.

Children:

Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord. - Colossians 3:20

Children are to obey their parents (the Greek word for child, *τέκνον*, implies that Paul is not talking to adult children). Once they reach the age of accountability, children may have to choose between obeying God or obeying their parents (See Matthew 10:35). We Christian parents should be careful not to force this choice on our own children.

Community: For Christ's sake, we should obey men's laws as much as possible:

Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, showing all meekness unto all men. - Titus 3:1-2

We should offer resistance to civil authorities only when they expect us to disobey God.

[When asked by the Priests why they disobeyed.] Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men. - Acts 5:29

We are ambassadors of Christ; as such, we should affect our community for Him.

And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also; - Acts 17:6

While we are turning the world upside down, we must be careful that we don't allow the community to do the same thing to our families.

A Modern Family

The Christian family must coexist, in our culture, with modern families. The modern family is one that has allowed the social engineers to dictate their family structure for them. This is how these engineers view the various family members:

God: There is no need for God in our culture. The government will take care of us.

Grandparents: Grandparents belong in senior living facilities, where they can be professionally looked after; this is so both parents can work.

Parents: Both parents should be working. In the post Christian era, our government will take care of us; however, this takes a large tax base. The stay-at-home mom is, therefore, to be frowned upon.

Children: The Government provides daycare for the younger ones and government schools for the older ones. Richer families can provide private daycare or schools for themselves.

The Government provides daycare for younger children and government schools for older children. Richer families can provide private daycare or schools for themselves.

As you can see this is a very efficient system (invented by Karl Marx). If a modern family is your vision, you will miss the blessing that God has for you and your family.

Appendix III - What is a Marriage?

As I mentioned in the introduction, my daughter posed this question after spending a summer at Summit Ministries. Since the act of marriage creates a new family with lifelong repercussions, this is more than an academic question.

The Marriage License

In the weddings that I have attended in recent years, the pastors have closed each ceremony with the benediction, “By the power vested in me by God and by the State of Oregon, I now pronounce you husband and wife.” This begs two questions: Does the State of Oregon really have the authority to declare two people married? Can a couple be married in the State of Oregon without the state's authority? If we do need the states authority, who gave them this authority and when were they given it?

We can ask the same question of Pastors. When did Jesus give pastors the authority to declare that a couple is husband and wife? This is a sincere question. You can leave me your comments.



Common Law Marriages

An older friend told me a story out of his childhood in the 1930s where a young couple slipped over the border from North Dakota into Canada to spend three days there. Since living together for three days made them legally married in that province of Canada, when they returned to North Dakota they were a married couple. If there is no ceremony and no contract, is it still a marriage?

Arranged Marriages

Arranged marriages, still common in many places, are ones where the parents pick their children's spouses.

Arranged marriages do not usually work in our American culture. The Bible's best example of an arranged marriage is where Laban arranged a marriage between his daughters and Jacob (Genesis 29:15). The problem with using Laban for an example is that he was a pagan (Genesis 31:19-35).

Isaac also had an arranged marriage (Genesis 24). While his is a brief account, it is not only an example of an arranged marriage, but also of a happy marriage.

While arranged marriages may work in some countries, or in other ages, there are problems for those who look at this option today. Two hundred years ago, families were closer together, and people did not travel much. In those days, the father would know the potential suitor's life history, as well as his family's character. Today when men come into my children's lives, I have little or no history to look at, therefore any decision has to be made mostly based on my feelings - not good.

What I have asked my children for is the right to dismiss any suitor that may come along. This way my children are actively in the decision process. If a father picks a bad spouse for his child,

not only will the child's marriage suffer, but a bad decision will strain the child's relationship with their father.

One of the Strangest Weddings Ever Reported

One of the strangest weddings in the Bible was one where there was no preacher, no state of Oregon, no permission from either the father or the daughter, and no wedding party.

Therefore they commanded the children of Benjamin, saying, Go and lie in wait in the vineyards; And see, and, behold, if the daughters of Shiloh come out to dance in dances, then come ye out of the vineyards, and catch you every man his wife of the daughters of Shiloh, and go to the land of Benjamin. And it shall be, when their fathers or their brethren come unto us to complain, that we will say unto them, Be favorable unto them for our sakes: because we reserved not to each man his wife in the war: for ye did not give unto them at this time, that ye should be guilty. And the children of Benjamin did so, and took them wives, according to their number, of them that danced, whom they caught: and they went and returned unto their inheritance, and repaired the cities, and dwelt in them.
- Judges 21:20-23

While the Bible does not say that the Lord approved of this method, and while there is no mention of these couples' future happiness, the Bible reports that this event did happen.

Becoming One flesh in Fornication

If marriage is similar to what the Bible calls becoming one flesh, than sex may be the only requirement. Paul even went so far as to suggest that a couple becomes one flesh in the act of fornication.

What? know ye not that he which is joined to a harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. - 1 Corinthians 6:16

My Definition of Marriage

The man makes a lifetime commitment before God to love his bride. Using Jesus as an example, to love means living sacrificially for her benefit.

The woman makes a commitment before to God to give herself in obedience to her husband. Using Jesus' relationship to His church as an example, she will submit to her husband's leadership of the family.

Since the Apostle Paul said that a man and woman become one flesh when they enter into a physical relationship, even when there is no State sanctioned or traditional wedding, God might hold a man and a woman who are in a physical relationship accountable to the standards of a married couple. The man ought to perform his duties as a husband, and the woman ought to be accountable to her duties as wife.

May God bless, you and your offspring as you surrender your life to Him. Amen

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End Notes:

[1] If you have any answers, please post them in the comment box.

[2] Queen Victoria reigned from 1837 until her death in January 1901.

[3] Jones, James H (1997) *Alfred C. Kinsey*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co Inc.

[4] If there is any impropriety in this passage, it was when the Lord's people went after idols and Ezekiel then compares them to a harlot.

[5] Strong's definition of female is θήλυς,; thay'-loos, from the same as θηλάζω.
(The definition of Θηλάζω: From θηλή (the nipple); to suckle; by implication to suck.
It seems that one couldn't even say female without thinking of a woman's more intimate qualities.)

[7] Half of all American children will witness the breakup of a parent's marriage. Of these, close to half will also see the breakup of a parent's second marriage." (Furstenberg, Peterson, Nord, and Zill, "Life Course") www.marriage-success-secrets.com

[8] While *The Gift of Fear* is not exactly a Christian resource, this book gives good advice on how to protect yourself from a manipulative or dangerous person.

[9] The first three secrets come from a seminar by Andy Stanley. I recommend his DVD imarriage to anyone who is married or thinking of marrying. <http://resources.northpoint.org>

[10] 18 shocking statistics about children and divorce.
www.marriage-success-secrets.com

[11] She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard. - Proverbs 31:16 She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant. - Proverbs 31:24

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I can be reached for questions and comments at jeff@the-gospel.org