

# Good and Bad Marriages

John Wesley's marriage was a disaster, and sometimes comments are made to the effect that John was at fault for being too involved in his work, and not paying enough attention to his wife.

## **The Model Husband**

Before making a judgment like that, let us consider the model husband, Jesus Christ. Jesus gave us the perfect example of both husband and wife. When on earth, He related to His Father as a faithful wife, and related to the church as the divine pattern of a Husband.

So far as His example of a wife, His Father's will was His only delight, pleasure, and honor. He found perfect satisfaction and joy in whatever His Father gave Him. This required self-denial, and swallowing up His desires into those of His Father. He did not complain, no matter what His Father gave Him, whether it was a lowly birth in a stable, no place to lay His head during His ministry, or a near death in the desert of temptation. Because of this submission and devotion, the Father gave His Son unlimited spiritual power to work with Him in proclaiming the gospel.

Now consider His example as Husband. Was the church neglected because He made the Father's will His highest aim and concern? Not at all, for the Father's will takes into account what is best for every creature. He did not have to choose between the Father's will and the needs of the church. Putting the Father in the proper place took care of that.

This is the model husband, and the model wife. There can be no better way than the way that Jesus marked out. He is "the Way."

## **Changes at the Fall**

Now let's consider the problems introduced into marriage because of the fall. Because of Eve's consent to the serpent's suggestions, womankind have a weakness for wanting to build their own kingdom, just as Eve desired this secret wisdom that would exalt her to be like God.

The weakness of man is a bit different. Adam was not deceived, but loved his wife more than the will of God. So he helped her to build her own kingdom instead of building God's kingdom.

So we have the Divine Pattern: the man building God's kingdom, and the woman helping him to build it. And we have Satan's twisted version: the woman building her own kingdom, and the man helping her to build it.

## **The Jewish Bride**

Now we just need to apply this measuring stick to determine if a marriage is being built the right way. First consider the Jewish bride.

The Jews provide the perfect example of a bad wife. They had their own idea of how Jesus should govern them, and how His power should be used to their benefit. He should have freed them from the Roman yoke; given them comfort, ease, and plenty; complimented and flattered them on how good their devotion and works were. When He would not do this, but instead reproved them, told them to submit to hardship, and to give up their foolish traditions, they crucified Him as the worst sort of criminal.

Clearly the Jewish bride was following the Satanic pattern: the Jews, as the woman, wanted to build their own kingdom, and Christ, as the husband, was to supply His power to build it. When He refused to stop building up the Father's kingdom instead of theirs, the Jewish bride rejected Him, and divorced Him.

## **Teaching the Wrong Way**

What is unusual is that the Satanic pattern is often taught in marriage seminars in churches today. The man is taught that loving his wife as Christ loved the church means to swallow up his interest in hers, and to spend much time taking care of her wants, needs, desires. If she becomes irritated or dissatisfied because he devotes time and attention to the work of God, then he is encouraged to leave that work, and pay attention to her instead.

When women come to marriage without overcoming the weaknesses that they have inherited through Eve, then they come with their own ideas of how it should be, what kind of household and attention they should get. They then look to their husbands to provide this. They have their dreams of the kingdom and the man is to provide the power to build it. Sometimes this kingdom is a nice, settled, comfortable home with children, or sometimes it also includes a career.

Many men succumb to the woman's idea of the kingdom with the thought that they are "loving their wives as Christ loved the church." But it is a delusion, and the fruit of this is seen in the fact that they cease to build up the work of God, and instead build a comfortable nest on this earth. This is often upheld as being a good Christian marriage, but is nothing of the sort. Such marriages can only produce hypocritical children at the best, and rebellious ones at the worst (unless the children are converted by an influence outside of the home).

Jesus never promised a comfortable nest to His bride. Instead, He invited her into His work, with the promise of His spiritual strength and comfort, but the warning of outward difficulties and trials.

## **John Wesley's Marriage**

Now let's look at John Wesley's marriage.

John Wesley was obviously called by God, and empowered by God to do a very important work in his time, one that strengthened and extended the work of Christ in the world. Should he have set this work aside to take care of his wife? Not at all. And in fact he made this very clear to her even before the marriage. He told her that he was not going to travel a bit less after the marriage than before.

Then what was the purpose of having a wife? Simply to help him in the work that the Father had given to him. If his wife had truly put self aside, and been swallowed up in the work as John was, she would have found perfect fulfillment for all her needs, and joy in knowing that she was extending the work of God in her own small way.

It was a very honorable place to which she was called, and instead of appreciating this, she tried to build her own dream kingdom. She treated John as the Jews treated Christ. You can read the details elsewhere, but it is a very sad story.

That John was not being a bad husband is obvious because he was following the pattern of Jesus Christ, which we outlined above. If his wife Molly had shared the same spirit of devotion to Christ's cause, she could have found a thousand ways to relieve his burdens and help him, and in this way he would have relied upon her more and more, and there would have been a sweet union in doing the work of God together.

### **Richard Baxter's Marriage**

You can see a very nice pattern of how it can work in the life of Richard Baxter and his wife. She assisted him in his work, and by doing this, found full satisfaction. He also relied on her very much in that work, and found her wisdom and gifts to be a perfect match for him and which made his work much more effective.

## **Love or Selfishness?**

God's way is never oppressive, and never deprives anyone of what they need. This is a lie that Satan has inculcated through the fall, and which we inherit.

### **Romans 8**

<sup>28</sup> All things work for good to those who love God.

Yes, even the real or imagined “neglect” of attention from others will work for our good. When this “neglect” causes murmuring or nagging, it is because self is not crucified. Self wants glory, self wants to be petted and praised. This is not a real need, it is an imaginary one, or a lust of the flesh. Real needs are longings for spiritual blessings, such as patience, trust, hope, courage, determination, and more and yet more of the love of God.

How does this love look like?

### **1 Corinthians 13**

<sup>5</sup> Love does not behave itself unseemly, seeks not her own, is not easily provoked, thinks no evil.

John Wesley's wife failed every one of these points. She behaved herself unseemly by dragging her husband by the hair; she sought her own attention and glory by demanding his time, she was easily provoked to jealousy by his letters of counsel to other women, and she thought evil of these counsels, and of his devotion to the work in general.

She became an agent of Satan to try and hinder the work of God. Her sins cannot be blamed upon her husband. There is no justification for sin. Blaming others for our sin is excuse-making, and reveals an unrepentant heart.

## **Faithful Mothers**

Behind every great man whom God used, there was a faithful mother and wife who filled the place that God intended women to fill. These mothers understood the role of a wife, to support their husbands in God's work, and to build up

children who would serve that work with pure and unremitting diligence and faithfulness.

These mothers prepared their children like Christ prepared the apostles, and showed by their honorable selfless course that they had overcome the inherited weakness of Eve by the grace of God and their own diligent effort. They had raised up a holy seed, “the seed of the woman” that would “bruise the serpent’s head” (*Genesis* 3:15). And by doing this, they showed the work of salvation within themselves, and fulfilled this promise:

**1 Timothy 2**

<sup>15</sup> Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.