Marriage & Family Relationships

The first marriage recorded in the Bible is that of Adam and Eve. In Gen 2:20-25, God sets the groundwork for marriages. Adam needed a suitable helper. It was not good for him to be alone. God created the woman Eve from one of Adam's ribs. Verse 24 states: "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh." (NIV) God gave Adam one wife and they became one flesh. This was God's design from the beginning. I believe God's desire was for marriage to be a partnership where a man and a woman come together to form a family.

In 1 Tim 3:2, Paul tells his young disciple Timothy, a rising leader in the church, that deacons must be the husband of but one wife. Christian leadership is to set the example and one spouse is the standard. I believe sexual greed is at the root of a person wanting more than one spouse.

Spheres of Influence

General: God sets the ground rules for family and church body interaction. Each person is first and foremost responsible to God and to obey His rules. In Eph 5:21-33 and Col 3:18-21, Paul outlines the rules for living together. First, each Christian is to be in submission to other Christians. We are to listen to one another, considering the counsel which comes to us from our spouse, the church leaders and the brethren. Certainly, some people will carry more weight and have a better record of speaking God's truth to you. Those people's advice is the most important to consider in making decisions.

Husbands: God also establishes the husband as the head of the household. He has the final word, but not the only word. In Eph 5:21-33, God tells the husband to love the wife as he would love himself. Each of us wants a voice in the decisions which affect our lives – so the wife and the other family members are to be considered in each decision the husband makes for the household. In Col 3:19, the husband is instructed not to be harsh with his wife.

Wives: The wife is given instruction to submit to the husband's authority in her life in his sphere of influence – "as is fitting in the Lord". Specifically, I believe this pertains to matters of the household – things like the raising of the children, spending of money and the overall running of the household. The husband does not have the right to ask his wife to go against God's laws or God's calling in her life. Certainly the husband's opinion should weigh heavily in wife's decision making and vice versa. The wife is also commanded to respect her husband.

A Picture: Marriage is a picture of the church's relationship with Jesus Christ. We are the Bride of Christ and are to be in submission to Him. Jesus loves us and gave His life for us. He wants what is best for us. This is the same attitude we are to have concerning our spouse, our children, our brethren and those we encounter on life's journey.

Children: Children are a gift from the Lord. Children are to obey their parents. Again, if a parent's instruction is overstepping God's realm of authority, children do not have to submit. The Scriptures are full of instruction on training children in the Lord. Parents are admonished to love and discipline their children. Children are told to honor their father and mother. Fathers are exhorted not to embitter their children or to exasperate them. In other words, fathers are told to expect reasonable behavior from their children, not being too strict and causing them rebel or too lenient and causing them to be lazy.

A Covenant

Marriage is a covenant between a man, a woman and God. This covenant is meant to be a loving commitment to one another and is to last a lifetime. If your spouse dies, you are free to marry again. There are rules on who you can marry. Basically, you can marry anyone who is not a close relative or who has been married to a close relative. The Bible teaches, as believers, we are only to marry another believer. We are not to be unevenly yoked. (2 Co 6:14) If you are married when you become a Christian, you are not to leave your unbelieving spouse.

Sexual conduct: The Bible has a lot to say about sexual conduct. Within the marriage covenant of one man and one woman, there are no restrictions listed for their private sexual life. Sexual intercourse is not allowed before marriage. Having sex with someone other than your spouse is called adultery and is prohibited in the Ten Commandments. (Ex 20:14) Jesus also said lusting after another person was committing adultery in your heart. (Mt 5:28) Viewing pornography is therefore the sin of mental adultery. It also can cause people to have unrealistic expectations of their spouse and greatly harm the marriage.

The husband's body also belongs to the wife and vice versa. (1 Co 7:3-5) There should not be "game playing" where one spouse refuses normal sexual activity to the other. God designed our bodies to give pleasure to one another and is the way we "become one flesh".

Divorce: In Mal 2:16, God said, "I hate divorce." In Mk 10:2-12, Jesus tells us not to divorce. However, there are two exceptions to this rule. In Mt 5:32, divorce is allowed if one spouse has committed adultery. (In the Old Testament, people caught in adultery were to be stoned to death.) The spouse who did not sin is **allowed** to divorce their spouse if they are unable to live with them. In 1 Co 7:10-16, if a person becomes a believer after being married and the spouse abandons them, they are free to divorce and remarry. In my opinion, if a woman is being beaten, having her life threatened by her husband, she is allowed to leave the marriage. This would come under the law about a person being able to defend themselves and their children.