

The Fleshly Marriage

“Because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God, for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able [to do so].”
(Romans 8:7)

Before discussing a fleshly or spiritual approach to marriage, a basic foundation must be laid. Often I hear lists of expectations from godly marriages that include those things that only God Himself can provide. **So our foundational basis for discussion is that marriage will not give what only Christ gives.** When there is disturbing behavior in our spouses, the most popular approach among Christians is to eat from the tree of good and evil and decide what to do to get the desired response, which is to make our own flesh comfortable by soothing the flesh of our mates. Obstacles to fleshly comfort are removed by us as we watch what we say, leap to attention at the sound of a raised or stressed voice, agree with all excuses for carnal behavior, and jump through every hoop, all in the hope of receiving a crumb of reward.

However, this whole approach will turn around and bite us, because flesh, which always calls out to be the center of its universe, becomes stronger when it is. Subsequently, then, one minus after a long list of positives will draw the negative response of anger, strife, withdrawal, and rejection. The mate who has been working really hard in the flesh to appease the other’s self-centeredness may simply give up.

There is another approach that is centered in Jesus, Who lived in a man’s body. Matthew 5, 6, and 7 describe how the body was meant to operate with peace. All commandments are primarily given for the good of the persons obeying them and not for the benefit of others, though that is definitely the secondary result. The command to love a wife is not given to comfort the flesh of the wife, but to give a man joy. The command to respect the husband is not given to benefit the husband, so the common phrase. “You don’t love me, so how could I respect you?” reveals the tit-for-tat attitude that the command exists for the benefit of the receiver rather than the doer.

The false assumption that the behavior of believers is to make the flesh of others comfortable is simply an error that, when believed, prostitutes love and respect and gives fleshly people excuses for their behavior. A man who hates, punishes, and withdraws from his wife never has a countenance worth emulating; his lack of love punishes himself. Whether or not the wife respects means nothing to the spiritual man; the command to respect was not given to aid the man in his pursuits, but to enable the woman to function properly.

Once the spiritual person sees this, he or she is truly set free from the behavior of others and can enter into true inner contentment springing from Christ. How others respond to our love or respect is not the issue; we need to love and respect to be happy. In this way we set others free from their own flesh, and they can find themselves loving unconditionally and respecting in the absence of merit. Is this a popular teaching? Not at all, for at its crux we find self-life continually being dealt deathblows. Yet, where there is death, His life is always manifested.

From Michael Wells “Abiding Life Ministries International”