

A Synopsis of
Reforming Marriage
by
Douglas Wilson

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The author of this synopsis highly encourages the reader to purchase a copy of Wilson's excellent book. One place to order it is: http://www.christianbook.com/ChristianBooks/product/115557136?item_no=767455&event=ESRC&item_code=WW

Introduction:

In his introduction, Wilson asks about the “spiritual aroma” of our homes. He explains that the “spiritual aroma” is the feeling or sense someone has when observing the interrelationships in our families. It’s the intangibles. Do visitors automatically know our homes to be loving places, or harsh and uncomfortable places?

Wilson teaches that the husband is to imitate Christ in the way our Savior takes care of His church.

John Bunyan once exhorted husbands to be “such a believing husband to your believing wife that she may say, ‘God has not only given me a husband, but such a husband as preaches to me every day the way of Christ to His church.’” (p. 10)

The health of all other relationships in the home depends on this relationship, and the key is found in how the husband is treating his wife. Or, put another way, when mamma ain’t happy, ain’t nobody happy. (p. 10)

Husbands and wives will be called upon to perform duties, but success is more than following a set of duties externally. Rather, it is a new heart that is the key!

Godly obedience will always bring in its train a host of *intangibles*. These intangibles constitute the aroma of obedience, and this aspect of true obedience frustrates the paint-by-numbers approach to marriage enhancement. This is why I am afraid that this book will be of little use to those who simply want a ‘formula’ to follow that will build them a happy marriage... However hard the externalist tries, he cannot produce the aroma of godliness. This is why so many people attend marriage seminars and read marriage books with so little result. The obedience of the Christian man is not limited to new actions – actions which, after all, can be copied mechanically. This does not appear to be a rare or unusual error; many people who are miserable in their marriages are also those who have read all the books. (p. 11, *emphasis mine*)

Of course, certain actions – godly obedience in externals – must be present in all healthy marriages; but in order to produce this distinctive aroma, the externals must proceed from new *hearts*. (p. 11)

Wilson reminds us that ultimately we are to have a heart that seeks to glorify God, even above our own wants.

the greatest desire of an obedient heart is the glory of God, *not* the happiness of the household. (p. 12)

But the glory of God is more important than our domestic happiness. (p. 12)

Chapter 1: A Practical Theology of Marriage

God is preeminent in all things, including marriage. Our marriages are to glorify God. A mature Christian understands these truths and seeks to live them out. Therefore it is necessary to be a mature Christian in order to be a mature spouse.

Maturity in the Lord is a prerequisite to maturity in marriage. (p. 13)

Marriage is covenantal. God is a covenant-keeping God and He has, in His sovereignty, chosen marriage as a way for us to glorify Him.

According to Creation, the woman physically and literally comes from man. And they are seen as one by God.

Women are Biblically dependent on men because the first woman came from a man. Men are Biblically dependent on women because every other man is born of a woman.

Men are called to a specific job, and the wife is called to helping the man in that job.

Regarding 1 Corinthians 11 and Genesis 2:

As a result of the creation order, men and women are oriented to one another *differently*. The man needs *the* help; the woman needs *to* help... He needs a companion suitable for him in the work to which God has called him. He is called to the work and must receive help from her. She is called to the work through ministering to him. He is oriented to the task, and she is oriented to him. (p. 19)

One purpose for marriage is for procreation.

Another purpose for marriage is sexual protection. Our spouses are to help us ward off sexual temptation.

Now God has provided a very practical help for Christians as they struggle with sexual temptation; that help is called sexual activity. In order to provide satisfactory protection, sexual relations with a spouse should not be infrequent. There needs to be quantitative protection, particularly for the husband. At the same time, the benefit of sexual relations should not be measured merely in terms of frequency or amount. There needs to be qualitative protection, particularly for the benefit of the wife. (p.21)

Chapter 2: Headship and Authority

God has decreed that husbands are the head of the household. This is not a command for husbands to “become” the head. They already are. It’s inescapable. If the husband does not act lovingly, he is still the head, just a poor one.

Our marriage relationship is a picture of Christ’s relationship to His bride, the church.

Regarding Ephesians 5:

In this passage of Ephesians, Paul tells us that husbands, in their role as head, provide a picture of Christ and the church. Because of sin and rebellion, many of these pictures are slanderous lies concerning Christ. *But a husband can never stop talking about Christ and church.* If he is obedient to God, he is preaching the truth; if he does not love his wife, he is speaking apostasy and lies – but he is always talking. If he deserts his wife, he is saying that this is the way Christ deserts His bride – a lie. If he is harsh with his wife and strikes her, he is saying that Christ is harsh with the church – another lie. If he sleeps with another woman, he is an adulterer, and a blasphemer as well. How could Christ love someone other than His own Bride? It is astonishing how, for a few moments of pleasure, faithless men can bring themselves to slander the faithfulness of Christ in such a way. (p. 25, emphasis mine)

Ephesians 5 commands husbands to love their wives. However, the command to wives is slightly different. They are commanded to respect their husbands.

The commands are given to our respective weaknesses in the performance of our duties. Men need to do their duty with respect to their wives – they need to *love*. Women need to do their duty in the same way – they need to *respect*. C.S. Lewis once commented that women tend to think of love as taking trouble for others... while men tend to think of love as not *giving* trouble to others. Men consequently need work in this area, and they are instructed in Scripture to undertake it. In a similar way, women are fully capable of

loving a man, and sacrificing for him, while believing the entire time that he is a true and unvarnished jerk. Women are good at this kind of love, but the central requirement given to wives is that they *respect* their husbands. As Christian women gather together (for prayer? for Bible study?), they frequently speak about their husbands in the most *disrespectful* way. Then they hurry home to cook, clean, and care for his kids. Why? Because they love their husbands. It is not wrong for the wives to love their husbands, but it is wrong to substitute love for the respect God requires. (p. 27)

But love is to be rendered to wives and respect to husbands, because God has required it, and not because any husband or wife has earned it. It is good for us to remember that God requires our spouses to render to us far more than any of us deserve. (p. 28)

Men have a need to be respected. Women have a need to be loved.

Wilson argues that it is unbiblical for men and women to each have separate careers.

The creation order means that all husbands are called to a particular task... Their wives are called to the role of aiding and supporting them in their calling... This obviously collides with the idea that men and women both have an equal right to pursue their separate careers as they climb up the professional ladder. Unfortunately, this assumption is common in the evangelical church today. (p. 30)

Wilson attributes this to men not leading properly and abdicating their authority.

One of the central difficulties we face in our culture today is the general “wimping out” of the Christian men. (p. 30)

Wilson makes it clear that this does not allow for men to bully or mistreat their wives.

But nothing is more offensive than hearing ignorant men trifle with these truths – making jokes about submission and so forth. Such trifling is completely unbiblical in tone. (p. 31)

A properly-ordered relationship is one in which the man knows he was created by God to accomplish a particular task, and he knows that his wife was created by God to help him with that task. (p. 32)

Because men are the head, men are responsible. Wilson argues that men are responsible for everything that happens in the home.

Taking a covenant oath to become a husband involves assuming responsibility for that home. (p. 33)

Wilson gave the example of the husband who secretly liked the fact that the children disobeyed their mother but not him. This husband failed to realize that, as the husband in a covenant relationship, her problems were his.

Her weakness must be acknowledged as his, so that his strength may become *her* strength. (p. 36)

For example, suppose a husband makes a decision based on information his wife gave him, and the information was in her area of expertise. Suppose further that some disaster occurs as a result. He understands this principle if he takes full responsibility for the resultant problem. But if he abdicates his role as leader, he will say something like, “Why did you...?” (p. 38)

Given this tremendous responsibility, both for men and women, Wilson warns us to marry wisely.

A woman should marry a man she respects, and a man should marry a woman he is willing to love and lead with a servant’s heart. (p. 38)

Wilson adds to the duties of the husband. The husband must be a teacher in the house.

But a man who speaks for his house, as Joshua did, must be a man who *teaches* his house, and he must be a man who refuses to submit his family to the foolishness of unbelief – whether the unbelief is dressed up in liberal or pop-evangelical clothes makes little difference... The question for husbands is, “Given my time, resources, and abilities, how much can I learn, and how much can I teach my wife and children?” (p. 40)

In addition to his Bible reading, an evangelical husband must be committed to reading books of solid doctrinal teaching, written by sound, qualified men¹. (p. 41)

Chapter 3: Duties of Husbands and Wives

Wilson starts this chapter out attacking the idea that only spontaneous actions are truly loving, and that premeditated dutiful ones are somehow less loving.

But the Bible defines love as a whole-hearted keeping of God’s commandments. The greatest act of love was certainly the death of Christ for His people, and that act of love was not offered on an emotional high. It was a bitter grief for Christ to drink the cup of God’s wrath, but that grief does not take away from His love for us; rather, it adds to it. (p. 43)

Wilson talks about the duties of the Christian husband.

A husband must always remember that as a husband he is a living picture of the Lord Jesus. (p. 44)

Because his relationship is speaking of Christ and the church all the time, he must learn to imitate Christ in character as well. (p.44)

[The husband] must nourish and cherish [his wife] in the same way that he cares for his own body (Eph. 5:29). (p.44)

A husband must be jealous and protective. Paul uses this image of a good husband to exhort the Corinthian Christians to faithfulness. “For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you a chaste virgin to Christ” (2 Cor. 11:2). (p. 45)

Wilson then reminds husbands of their duties to the daily needs of their wives: food, clothing, shelter, etc.

Neglect of a man’s wife in this fashion is the equivalent of *apostasy* – it is a denial of Christ, who feeds His bride. (p. 46)

Another duty of the husband is to be content with his wife. This is a command – to be content.

Regarding Proverbs 5:15-19:

To compare a woman with others, whether silently or aloud, whether with words or actions, is always destructive. And the more comparisons are made, the less contentment is possible. A husband must be content in *all* areas; consequently, comparisons must be avoided in all areas, whether involving beauty, cooking, intelligence, imagined sexual responsiveness, whatever. (p. 47)

¹ When I read this quotation to my wife, she and I both jokingly wondered if Wilson meant books by HIM!!! ☺

According to Numbers 30:13-15, husbands are to approve or disapprove the commitments made by their wives:

We should recognize that when a husband says nothing, he is approving and leading *by default*. Whether he speaks or is silent, a man cannot cease being the head of the home. He can do it badly or well, but he cannot escape from the responsibility God has placed upon him. (pp. 47-48)

Not only is the husband responsible to God to do his duties, but he is also responsible to God to see to it that the wife does her duties.

One duty, God willing, is to bear children.

A wife must not *complain* in her fruitfulness. The fruitfulness of childbearing and childrearing is frequently very hard work. How could it *not* be? Nevertheless, it is God's doing (Gen. 3:16), and it is the wife's duty to submit to the will of God and gladly bear children for her husband. (p. 49)

Lest you conclude that Wilson advocates everyone having 20 kids, he tempers his remarks with the following:

Sometimes, in reaction to the "anti-children" mentality of the modern world, some Christian women have taken to bearing children almost as an act of defiance and rebellion. But we must not be reactionaries against the world; rather, we must all live before the Lord. (p. 49)

God has called women to hard work in the home.

The Bible also gives wives the duty of being industrious in the home. Paul instructs Titus to have "the older women [be] teachers of good things – that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed" (Tit. 2:3-5). The instruction is that the younger women are to be homemakers, involved in domestic pursuits. Not only are they to *be* home, they are to be *productive* at home. Industry in the home means hard work in cleaning, cooking, child-rearing, and so forth. *It is possible to disobey God through neglect of the dishes.* (p. 49)

Of course this is hard work, especially when the little ones are young. Many wives, when they go through this experience, are tempted to treat "being tired" as though it were a symptom of having done something wrong. Rather, **it is a symptom of having done many things right.** (p. 49, **emphasis mine**)

The Bible does not teach that the woman's place is in the home; it requires that the home be her *priority*, but she is not at all limited to the home. (p. 49)

God has endorsed the sexual relationship as a means to glorify Himself, and to protect the marriage by guarding against temptation.

A wife must meet her husband's sexual needs (1 Cor. 7:2-5). This involves being more than just "willing" whenever "he wants it"; it involves being a *responsive* lover. (p. 50)

God has given the sexual relationship in marriage as a protection against immorality. It is important that this purpose be remembered, especially by wives. Women have a tendency to be insulted at their husbands' temptations, and insulted and offended wife is no protection at all. (p.50)

Another duty of the wife is to use her words to encourage and build up her husband, and not to nag and argue. Wilson cites Proverbs 19:13, Proverbs 27:15-16, and Proverbs 31:26.

Another duty of the wife is to be a disciple of her husband, to learn from him. (1 Corinthians 14:34-35).

One final duty of the wife is to be charitable (1 Timothy 5:9-10).

A woman who understands all these duties, and labors faithfully at them, is frankly a woman who is *priceless*. (p. 51)

Chapter 4: Efficacious Love

The love husbands bestow on their wives is to be the sort that changes them, that makes them lovely.

In the grace of God, Christ made His people lovely; He did not find them lovely. (p. 54)

As a husband treats his wife in the scriptural fashion, he should expect her to grow increasingly lovely. (p. 54)

No husband is sufficient for these things, and yet the grace of God is strong and powerful, and can work in sinful husbands, and can transform sinful marriages. (p. 55)

It is crucial that husbands come to see that they must assume full responsibility for the loveliness of their wives. (p. 55)

Wilson notes that some Christians have reacted to the world's obsession with external beauty by labeling it "worldly" to be concerned about looks. He argues that this is wrong. There are many examples in the Bible of righteous women who are beautiful on the outside: Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, Abigail, Esther, to name a few.

Some women are more naturally beautiful than others, but when a woman is loved Biblically by a dutiful Christian husband, she should be more beautiful on her 10th anniversary than on her first. This is because her husband's Biblical treatment of her over the years has made her lovelier.

We must avoid the truth our Lord said about the Pharisees, that they were like beautiful tombs on the outside, but unclean on the inside (Matthew 23:27.) We are to consider both internal and external beauty.

So while we must not accept the pagan notion that only the "spiritual" has any value, we must guard ourselves against the opposite pagan snare as well. This is the idea that *only* the material and external has any value, and that the internal spiritual beauty is irrelevant. The assumption is that if only a woman gets the right skin moisturizer, uses the right makeup, dresses well, keeps herself trim, and so on, *ad infinitum*, then she will be beautiful. The Bible teaches that it is not necessarily so – a beautiful woman without discretion presents the same kind of incongruity as lipstick on a camel (Prov. 11:22). (p. 58)

Wilson argues that Paul prohibits excessive adornment in 1 Timothy 2:9, not modest adornment.

In other words, when women are beautiful and unholy, their beauty is a provocation to the Lord... Conversely, when a woman is lovely in her spirit, that loveliness cannot be contained. (p. 59)

Wilson exhorts husbands to rediscover the lost art of courtesy! Speak nicely to your wives. Open the door for her. This is one way husbands can honor their wives.

Biblical honor must show up in verbal and visible demonstrations that proceed from the heart, but are not locked up in the heart. (p. 60)

Honor and respect are to go both ways in all our relationships.

The Bible requires that the strong honor and respect the weak. But in the world, the strong take advantage of the weak. In the church, the strong are to respect the weak. (p. 61)

Christian husbands need to begin the recovery of courteous habits in their treatment of their wives. (p. 62)

In regard to the subject of romantic love, Wilson writes:

Romantic love, as it is commonly understood, is a modern idol of the mind, emotions, and heart. Because many husbands and wives serve this idol, it is not surprising that it causes great dissatisfaction within marriage, hopeless expectations, quarrels, fights, and, of course, divorces. (p. 63)

Wilson describes a love that is dutiful, deliberate, one that the spouses each plan to do good to the other. This is different than the emotional feeling-oriented “love” that is exalted today by our culture. Wilson argues why our culture’s version of love is flawed:

... the emotional impossibility of retaining “very first time” sensations throughout the course of a relationship. Relationships are supposed to mature. This maturing means growth and improvement, not the constant buzz of the initial rush. (p. 64)

Men are to love their wives as Christ loved His wife – self-sacrificially. They are to do so knowing that love, scripturally understood, is not a sentiment or emotion, but rather a series of actions which transform. Biblical love is efficacious... But it is not the same thing as the infatuation they both felt when they first got together – it cannot be. It is far more mature than this. It must therefore not be confused with romantic love; it is far, far better. (p. 66)

Chapter 5: Keeping Short Accounts

Because marriage is between two humans, it is between two sinners.

Our problem is that husbands and wives are sinners. Marriage problems are overwhelmingly problems with *sin* – lack of conformity to the Word of God in our thoughts, words, and actions. (p. 67)

In order for a marriage to be healthy, both husband and wife must understand what sin is, what God’s provision for sin in the cross was, and what to do when they sin against God in the marriage relationship. (p. 67)

Wilson reminds us that sin must be confessed to God, and if against another human, to them as well. This must be done as soon as one realizes that they have sinned.

Keeping short accounts means that an individual does not postpone confession of sin if confession is necessary. (p. 67)

Nothing good was ever accomplished through postponement of confession. (p. 68)

Wilson reminds us that we do not confess our sins so that we will be justified or so that we won’t “lose our salvation,” (both of which are impossible based on our own works), but rather we confess our sins because this is what God has decreed we do. Also, to disobey in this area will affect the enjoyment of our justification.

But the same principal applies to other relationships as well, including the relationships within the family. If a child is out of fellowship with his parents, that child does not cease to be the parents’ child. The *fact* of the relationship is untouched. (p. 69)

Wilson argues that many people do not know how to confess and apologize. Restitution is required. If an item is stolen, not only must an apology be given, but the item must be returned.

But the humbling that results from making restitution is equally good for the soul. Restitution is so humbling that it really teaches us to think twice before sinning in that way again. (p. 70)

But married couples can easily fall into a pattern of apologizing which is geared more to saving face than it is geared to putting things right with the other person. Furthermore, the other person often goes along with the charade because he does not know how to extend true forgiveness any more than the one who sinned knows how to apologize. Forgiveness presupposes genuine wrongdoing on the part of the other person. The difficulty is that we have a hard time forgiving genuine wrongdoing. This is why people apologize as if the “real me” was not the culprit. “I’m sorry. I was angry and I said some things I didn’t mean.” This is relatively easy to forgive *because the other person didn’t mean it*. But sin can only be forgiven when the person *did* mean it – it is then *sin*, and can be forgiven. The one apologizing should have said, “I was wrong in what I said and did this morning. I was angry and I shouldn’t have been. I said those things because I wanted to hurt you. At the time, I meant what I said, and what I said and meant was offensive to God and hurtful to you. Would you please accept my apology?” (pp. 70-71)

If confession of sin between a husband and wife has not properly been done in a while, or ever, then time should be set aside for this vital task. Not every sin need be brought up, but every sin area must be.

The problem with confessing sins is that sometimes the other person can get angry over the sin revealed in the confession, or, if they already knew about it, they can still resentfully refuse to forgive. Before there was only one sin; now there are two. “And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors” (Mt 6:12). (p. 72)

It does not matter what the other person did, the one offended still has *no right to an unforgiving attitude*. (p. 72)

Sin must be confessed immediately, and not allowed to fester.

When a couple is serious about addressing the problem, they acknowledge their sin to God *as sin*, and thank Him for His forgiveness. If the sin has harmed anyone else, then restitution is necessary. If a wife has yelled at her husband, then she must ask forgiveness. She may not excuse herself based on all the things he did or did not do to provoke her. The same thing applies to the husband; He must confess his sins, not hers. Just as she must confess her sins, not his. Each person could confess the sins of the other all day, and their joy would not be restored. (p. 73)

An apology must not be a backhanded way of trying to get the other to apologize. (p. 73)

Wilson gives tips for dealing with sin properly:

1. Never split up until the sin is confessed and apology given. The husband doesn’t go to work, and the wife does not leave the home until this is done.
2. Don’t let anyone in your home when there is no marital harmony.
3. Similarly, don’t go anywhere until the sin is dealt with.
4. If a sin is done in public and is obvious to all, then it should be confessed and dealt with in public in front of the witnesses. “Restitution should always be as public as the sin was.” (p. 75.) If a sin is done in public, but not obvious to all, the couple should have some sort of private hand signal that communicates, “I’m sorry,” and another that communicates “I forgive you.”
5. Never have sexual relations until your sin is dealt with. This prevents what God intended to be a wonderful experience of unity being used hypocritically.

This chapter, as the title suggests, contains various marital temptations Wilson has seen over the years of his pastorate.

One common temptation is to fall into what Wilson calls “The Nice Guy Syndrome.” This is when a man has refused to take his rightful position as head of the household. Often men who are considered “nice guys” fall into this. Wilson calls it being a “spiritual eunuch.”

When a husband has this problem, the result for the wife is a temptation to deep-seated frustration and resentment. When she gives way to the temptation, the symptoms of this frustration can manifest themselves in many ways, both small and great... The irony is that such spiritual eunuchs are almost always nice guys. And because the symptoms of this spiritual neglect overtly appear in the wife, the watching world usually wonders “what on earth got into *her*?” (pp. 77-78)

The “niceness” of not leading properly is not Biblical gentleness.

How many Christian women today can be considered as daughters of Abraham? How many of them could imagine calling their husband *lord* with a straight face? (p. 78)

Now it goes without saying that this authority must be exercised by a man with a Christ-like disposition to service. He must not wield his authority in a self-seeking way. (p. 78)

If someone wants a garden full of weeds, no husbandry is necessary. And if someone wants a wife full of frustration, nothing needs to be done to accomplish that either. All a man has to do is leave her alone. And nice guys are very good at leaving their wives alone. (p.79)

Husbands must be prepared to give their wives godly counsel.

There are many occasions when a wife is feeling distressed about some difficulty, and she comes to her husband and says, “What should I do?” An abdicating husband will tell her that he does not care and that she can do whatever she wants to do. But when a wife seeks counsel from her husband, *she should always receive counsel*. When she comes to her husband and asks for a decision, he should always *make* a decision. (p. 81)

When a woman has come to my wife for counsel and advice, one of the things my wife commonly asks is whether or not her husbands knows and approves of her seeking this counsel. And when they are talking about whatever her concern happens to be, my wife will frequently ask what her husband says about this. (p. 81)

A husband must never have an “I told you so” attitude. Moreover, a husband must always take responsibility for all decisions made in the home. This does not mean that the husband makes all the decisions; it means he takes responsibility.

Now a godly husband may decide, after taking his wife’s concerns into account, to do things “her way.” But in a godly home, as soon as he does this, it *becomes his decision*. He is entirely responsible for it. Once the decision is made, it is his decision. If his wife tries to blame herself for how it all turned out, he should restrain her. “No, dear. This is all my doing.” It may have been her idea in the discussion, but in a biblical home, it was his idea to *do* it. (p. 82)

A husband should beware of not telling his wife about doing things when he thinks she won't approve. This is often a sign that the husband has abdicated his authority.

Some abdicating husbands may think they are being decisive when they go off and do something without consulting with their wives at all. "You bought *what*?" This sort of thing is a far cry from biblical leadership; if he thinks something is right to do, a godly husband does not shy away from discussing it with his wife *before he does it*. When a husband acts without consulting his wife, it is commonly because he recognizes that she has practical veto power in the home. Because this particular thing is something he really wants to do, he does it without letting her know beforehand. This is not leadership; it is self-centered abdication. (p. 82)

When a man realizes he has been an abdicating husband, he must treat that the way he would treat any sin. Confession, repentance, pray for strength to not do it again.

In regard to the natural differences between men and women, Wilson observes our culture's angst in this area. Many today don't like that men and women might be inherently different, and certainly don't like that there may be a hierarchy!

If God has created us with certain differences and distinctions, and He did, we ignore those distinctions at our peril. This is particularly the case when it comes to the differences between men and women. (p. 85)

One of the natural differences that tend to be consistent between the genders is the way we communicate. Wilson tells the funny story of a man coming home from work to a wife who is obviously distraught. The husband asks her what is wrong. Stewing in her frustration, she says "Nothing!" "Good," he thinks, "I thought something was wrong." And he sits in front of the TV.

Men and women have different ways in which they use the English language. When we fail to properly translate our words and thoughts, problems follow on hard." (p. 87)

Wilson also warns the reader about the differences in motives between men and women. In particular, men and women often incorrectly read the motives of their spouse.

Love does *not* jump to conclusions, and it does not try to read the motives of the other person's heart. Whenever there has been any kind of conflict, it is very easy to be wrong about the other person's motives, and very difficult to be right about them. (p. 87)

Another difference is the way men and women think. In general, men tend to be much more analytical in their thinking, while women tend to be more emotionally-lead in their thinking.

There are times when a wife is distraught over something, and the husband thinks he should lecture her on why it all happened the way it did. But his gifts of analysis, however sharp, are no good in that situation. At that point, she does not need information – *she needs a hug*. He should tell her that everything will be all right, and he should then keep his mouth shut. This does not mean that his analytic abilities have no use. If he comes to her later, and tells her that he has been thinking and praying about what happened yesterday and that he has some thoughts on how to deal with it the next time, she will be very appreciative. (pp. 87-88)

Another temptation to avoid in marriage is the temptation to go into debt. This can be a symptom of the husband abdicating his authority.

First, husbands who have abdicated generally will also have a tendency to abdicate when it comes to setting financial limits for their households. They consequently allow their wives to spend beyond their family's resources; this is a subset of a larger problem of abdication. Because the husband is afraid to say *no* on any issue, it makes sense when we see that he cannot say *no* on financial issues. (p. 89)

But the second aspect of this problem is even more serious. Husbands can often *encourage* their wives to spend beyond the family's resources. This encouragement is the result of the husband trying to palliate his guilt. When the husband is not providing for his wife's spiritual need for strong leadership, he can fall for the easy alternative of giving her *things* instead. The result is that guilty husbands, in this world of easy credit, are allowed the illusionary belief that they are far better providers than they actually are. (p. 90)

Wilson reminds us that not being able to lead properly in the home disqualifies one from leading in the church. He says that financial problems in the home can be a sign of a lack of diligence on the part of the husband.

Turning to another common temptation in marriage, Wilson has this to say about pornography:

One of the principal problems with pornography is the damage it has caused through its lies about sexuality. The central lie in pornography is that it says men and women have different bodies but the same kinds of brains. It says that women are as eager for sex and approach sex in the same way that men do. (p. 91)

Wilson observes that men want sex, women want security.

If we interviewed a thousand men who were promiscuous, we would find we had a thousand men with a lack of self-control with regard to sexual temptation. If we were to do the same with a thousand promiscuous women, we would not find a thousand women with a sexual problem, but rather with a security problem. They are generally not looking for great sexual satisfaction, but rather for emotional security. (p. 92)

Wilson tells the story of a young girl he knew as a boy. Wilson's dad remarked to his wife that the little girl would have problems when she grew up, and likely with men. This was because when they showed up at her house, she was climbing all over the older gentleman. Sadly, this girl did grow up to have problems with men.

If a strange man comes into a home, and a little girl climbs on his lap, something is seriously wrong. The girl has a big vacuum in her life – a need for masculine attention – that is not being filled by her father. She has a hunger for masculine attention; when she enters adolescence, she will suddenly discover that she now has a commodity with which she can bargain, and she will be tempted to begin to use it. This is because she still has a need for the security, and a void that still needs to be filled with masculine attention. Now all of a sudden men are *voluntarily* paying attention to her. Before, as a little girl, she was a nuisance chasing after men, but now they are coming to her. Of course they are after one thing, and she is after another. They consequently make an exchange that makes neither one of them truly happy. (pp. 92-93)

The next temptation Wilson tackles is the temptation to attack. He warns against "attack words" like "never" and "always." He reminds us that we are commanded in the Bible to be quick to listen and slow to speak. "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath" (James 1:19.)

Most of us need practice in being quick to listen. Suppose the wife presents her concern, and she does it without anger. If he responds by defending himself (whether he is right or wrong does not matter), then he is probably not being quick to listen. But if he hears her out, and then says something like this – "Let me make sure I am understanding you. You think that..." After that point, however he responds, she at least knows that he heard and understood her. This is obedience to the command to be *fast* in listening. (p. 93)

Wilson outlines two advantages to this approach: 1) It is hard to be angry with someone who is listening to you considerately, and 2) It is hard to fall into the "never" statement of "you never listen to me."

When someone offers criticism, it is difficult to be quick to listen and slow to speak. (p. 94)

Wilson supposes a case where a wife accuses her husband of something. He is either guilty or innocent. The husband must take care to react to the criticism in a way that honors our Lord, and this way is being slow to speak and quick to hear.

If the husband is guilty, he should make amends immediately, (confession, repentance, change, prayer). If he is innocent, he should not be so quick to defend himself.

But if the husband has a reasonable defense, the last thing he should do is to present it at this moment. He should show that he understands what her concerns are, repeat each one of them, and then say he would like to talk about the issue later... **The goal is not to win the argument, but to maintain the relationship.** When the husband is ahead 15-3 in husband/wife fights, they are both losers. (pp. 94-95, **emphasis mine**)

Wilson cautions us not to let our temptations become the other person's sin. Remember, there is no sin in being tempted, so if a husband has a fleeting temptation and discloses it to his wife, he may cause her to sin. This is pointless.

Another situation to avoid is telling someone about a temptation when they're in the middle of causing it. Wilson uses the example of a wife who is tempted to anger every time the husband leaves his dirty socks on the floor. It is not a good time for her to tell him this as he's doing it. Better would be to approach him sometime later and say something like, "Honey, can I tell you something you do that tempts me to anger?" That way the husband can say, "Yes, please tell me," and then a healthy discussion can happen.

Wilson's final example of a common temptation is for spouses to be inappropriately jealous of one another. Instead of giving an example of improper jealousy, Wilson makes the case for good and appropriate Biblical jealousy. Biblical jealousy is protective.

When a daughter has a father who is jealous for her purity, he watches out for her interests. And when such a father gives his daughter in marriage to a man worthy of the position, the new husband promises the father that he will be equally jealous. So when a godly woman submits to her husband, she is being liberated through godly male protection... The only difference between feminists and Christians is that Christians place the duty of protection with fathers and husbands while feminists place the duty of protection with various male-dominated federal agencies. (p. 98)

Chapter 7: The Marriage Bed is Honorable

Wilson warns us against embracing humanistic views on sexuality, even if it comes from a so-called "Christian book." He reminds us to seek Biblical advice, and only listen to teachers who teach Biblically.

Wilson points us to 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5, "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God."

From this passage we learn that not only are we to be faithful to our spouse, but to have sexual relations that are pure and honorable.

Many men have not learned how to take a wife in a pure and honorable way. They come to the marriage bed with the same kind of passionate lust which is characteristic of unbelievers. But Paul tells us here that Christians are to be different in *how* they love, not just in *whom* they love. (p. 100)

Modernity has sent us all off on a frustrating search for the perfect sexual experience, and this vain quest, this sexual snipe-hunt, has even ensnared many Christian married couples. We are told, and not just by non-Christians, that we have an obligation to have "dynamic sex-lives." But the subtle distortion here can have one of two results. It either leads to a frenzied hunt for the ultimate sexual experience, or it leads to an acquiescing frustration and dissatisfaction with "normal" sex. (pp. 100-101)

There are two reasons why our society's obsession with its search for the better orgasm is a futile search:

- The Law of Diminishing Returns
- Our Finitude.

In regard to the law of diminishing returns, Wilson points out that if everything is "dynamic," then the dynamic becomes "ordinary." One must continue to try new things and new novelties to keep to the same thrill level.

Christian men have not learned how to take a wife in a pure way; they do so with the passionate (and frustrated) lust of the nonbelievers. This frustrating search for the Perfect Orgasm Every Time has ensnared many Christian marriages. This distortion can easily lead to various perversions in the frenzy for more and more sexual pleasure. (p. 101)

In regard to our finitude, Wilson writes:

We are finite creatures, and, consequently, our capacity for sexual pleasure has *set limits*. But lust, by its very nature, is incapable of recognizing such limits. Lust demands from a finite thing what only the infinite God can provide. Therefore, when someone in the grip of lust comes up against the wall of his finitude, he demands alternatives. This unwillingness to submit to the finitude of sexual pleasure has produced all manner of sexual perversions. (p. 101)

Wilson defends himself from anyone who may interpret these views as meaning that sex shouldn't be fun.

A man and a woman who accept their finitude and who seek to honor God in how they love each other will of course enjoy themselves sexually. But that enjoyment will have the *normal range* that is to be expected from any physical pleasure. Sometimes they will enjoy a "steak dinner," and it really will be extraordinary. Other times it will be quite ordinary – macaroni and cheese – but still enjoyable. Should they enjoy extraordinary sexual experiences? Yes, of course – *sometimes*. (pp. 101-102)

Wilson makes the case that the primary purpose of sex is to have children. I'm not sure I buy into this 100%, but I'll do my best to sum up his argument.

He uses the analogy of food. The primary purpose for food is so that we can intake nutrients. There is a secondary benefit to food, and that is the pleasure we get from eating something that tastes good. But the primary purpose is sustenance, not gratification of our senses with something that tastes good.

In the same way, Wilson argues, the primary purpose for sex is to procreate. We may gather pleasure from it as well, just as someone gets pleasure from eating a good meal, but the primary function is procreation.

Just because the primary function of food is sustenance doesn't mean that we don't enjoy eating! In the same way, just because the primary purpose of sex is procreation doesn't mean we shouldn't enjoy sex as well. Wilson argues that we should enjoy it!

A Christian married couple may have any number of reasons for their lovemaking on any given occasion, ranging from simple sexual appetite to emotional comfort. But none of this changes the biological fact, which is the possibility of children, which is unaltered by the other purposes and benefits. The one who seeks to serve the pleasure *alone* is like a man who thinks the purpose of farming is to get a sun tan. (p. 103)

Wilson does not mean to imply that Christians must have lots and lots of babies and the birth control is automatically wrong. He alerts the reader that this will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

Just as we must guard against lust, we must also guard against the other direction as well, which is to have a prudish view of sex.

While sexual pleasure is threatened by the unbelievers who would stampede through it, it is also unfortunately threatened by “decent” people who, frankly, are afraid of it and run away in the other direction. But such a reaction against unabashed sexual pleasure must ignore the clear teaching of the Bible just as much as the former error does. The Christian marriage bed must be both disciplined *and* liberated. But the standards for *both* must come from the Scriptures and only from the Scriptures. We must not seek to be “liberated” by the world and its lusts, and we must not be “disciplined” by vestigial Victorian prudishness in the church. Both are anti-scriptural. (p. 104)

Wilson sets the “Song of Solomon” as an example of what our attitude towards godly lovemaking should be.

The purpose of looking at certain portions of [the Song of Solomon] is to help Christian couples who accept the boundaries of their finitude, but who also want to know exactly what those boundaries are... In some places, the meaning of the poet can hardly be missed, and for prudish Christians, the clarity of the point is all the more embarrassing. But embarrassment is not an appropriate response for Christians; all of Scripture is inspired, and is profitable for instruction... The benefit to be gained from the *Song* is not a list of rules or techniques but rather an *attitude* toward lovemaking. (pp. 104-105)

Despite the fact that the Song of Solomon is sexual, it is not pornographic because we observe the couple “through a veil.” It is instructive enough to teach us, but hidden enough to protect us from inappropriate reading.

A few of Wilson’s observations about lovemaking in the Song of Solomon:

- it involves more than just the sense of touch; taste, sight, and smell are all part of it
- the surroundings matter. there is talk of the green field and cedar beams and fir rafters.
- the woman is described as a garden and also is said to possess a garden
- the woman is to be eager for the man to eat of her fruit (use your imagination!)
- the man is drawn to all of the woman’s body: feet, legs, navel, breasts...

The joy of sex, about which the world talks much and knows very little, is a gift to us from God. Because God is good to us, the man gives and receives, and the woman receives and gives, tremendous pleasure. (p. 108)

When a husband and wife have a physical union along with spiritual harmony, then it provides a good picture of Christ and the church. A couple who have this physical union, but who are constantly fighting are *constantly lying* about Christ and the church. (p. 108)

So mental or physical infidelity is telling a lie about the spiritual faithfulness of Jesus to His people. (pp. 108-109, emphasis mine)

The Bible tells us clearly that we are to have nothing to do with sexual immorality. We are even to avoid *verbal* jesting about immorality. (p. 109)

Wilson argues that disharmony in the home, sexual or spiritual, sends a powerful message to the children that the union of Christ and the church is not a strong one.

Wilson warns against the tendency in the church to view all talk of sex as taboo. The sexual relationship between a husband and wife is not immoral and it should not be pretended away.

That there is a sexual relationship at the center of the home should be obvious to all who live there – hugs, kisses, and romantic attention. If the children know that there is a fundamental unity between husband and wife, they can easily understand the spiritual analogy of Christ and His people. (p. 110)

Wilson argues against entertainment that shows nudity or sex scenes. He uses an illustration of a neighbor coming to your house and asking you if you want to watch he and his wife have sex. “Of course not!” you’d reply! But how is that different than watching it on TV with actors?

There is no way to watch – for *entertainment* – bed scenes or displays of nudity without being affected negatively in some way. (p. 111)

A man should see to it that his wife *alone* is the basis of his sexual excitement and satisfaction. Other women, whether in films, books, or magazines, must not be the source of his arousal. As soon as other women get into a husband’s sexual thinking, then Christ’s clear prohibition applies: “But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Mt. 5:28). (p.112)

Finally, Wilson warns us against not protecting our covenant relationship enough.

Often husbands fail to build a sufficiently high fence around the covenant relationship of marriage. They do this by allowing *one-on-one* relationships to develop with members of the opposite sex outside the immediate family. A man may allow a relationship with a female friend to grow – and she is not his wife, mother, sister, daughter, or grandmother. A wife may be close to a man not her husband, father, brother, son, or grandfather. This is foolhardy; when two individuals are on guard against physical intimacy only, they are allowing other forms of intimacy to grow unwatched. To guard against this, a married couple should befriend others, and function socially, *as a couple*. (pp. 117-118)

Our culture is doing to sex what people who chew with their mouths open do to food. (p. 118)

Chapter 8: Multiplying Fruitfully

Wilson begins this chapter by acknowledging that specific instruction on birth control is not found in the Bible. Though “birth control” is never literally stated in Scripture, there are, however, principals that do apply.

As many Christians have come to recognize, our culture has a lousy attitude towards kids. Because this bad attitude is so apparent, some Christians have reacted to this sin and have come to maintain that large families are the unqualified blessing, no matter what. This is obviously much closer to the truth than the anti-child mindset, but something is still missing. (p. 119)

We must not see children the way many in our culture do. This means that if we meet a family with 8 kids, we are not to harbor snide thoughts or roll our eyes. Wilson laments that some Christians have been “thoroughly compromised by the world’s hostile attitude towards children. They are going to have their allotted 1.7 children, pop the kids into daycare six weeks after birth, and pursue their dual careers. But the Scripture presents a view of children which is entirely antithetical to this” (p. 119).

Often it is the case that what has the potential to be a blessing also has the potential to be a curse. It is the same with children and large families.

When children are brought up in the Lord, and they walk with Him when they are grown, the blessing this brings to parents is unspeakable. And the more this happens, *the better it is*. Large, *obedient* families are a blessing. But when the children are disobedient, the more there are, the worse it is. Samuel would not have been more greatly blessed if he had five sons who took bribes instead of two (1 Sam. 8:3). Joel and Abijah were enough. (p. 120)

In regard to Psalm 127, “Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD,” Wilson points out that the context shows that the blessing of children comes with contending with his enemies at the gate. These are grown children, not little ones. Obedient grown children are a blessing. Until they are grown, they’re a LOT OF WORK!

Some husbands think they have a commitment to the biblical view of family just because they are male, opinionated, and dislike condoms. These are the men who are headed for grief (in the form of fools for sons) and who are leading their wives into bitterness. (p. 121)

Raising a child biblically requires pain, time, and Christ-like sacrifice. Do not enter this lightly.

The Lord offers to bless us with much in our children, and to whom much is given, much is required. (p. 122)

More and more young couples are deciding to trust God in the area of family planning – ready to receive as many “as God sends.” At the time the decision is made they both feel very good about it. But after they have been married for five years, the young husband finds himself with four pre-school children and one wife with second thoughts. (p. 122)

The husband must encourage his child-rearing wife!

A principal cause of discouragement is exhaustion. If a mother is doing her job at home with her little ones, she will be far more physically tired than she used to be before they arrived. (p. 123)

The husband can help in a few concrete ways:

- help with the kids
- refrain from acting like an extra kid
- watch the kids at least once a week so the wife can get out by herself
- get a babysitter regularly so that the husband and wife can go out together

The husband must be sensitive to his wife’s body.

[The husband] should recognize that the kids are placing demands on his wife’s body all day long – they want to nurse, they want to be carried, they want to be held, etc. This means that he should be sensitive to how he approaches her sexually. He must not be just one more voice in the clamor. (p. 123)

The husband must encourage his wife to see the long-term benefits of child-rearing.

The most important returns from child-rearing in this life do not come in the first five years. When the children are little, we have to invest more time and energy. But if they are disciplined and taught well, as they grow they will begin to contribute far more to the family than they receive from it... So a husband should encourage his wife by reminding her of the eternal value of the work she is doing. (p. 123)

The husband must show appreciation to his wife for the hard work she is doing. The world we live in does not appreciate the hard work of stay-at-home moms. Husbands must regularly show their appreciation.

Related to this is the importance of honoring pregnancy. Throughout Scripture, we see fruitfulness exalted. One of the most valuable things I ever learned from my father was the loveliness of a pregnant woman. So instead of mockery and flippant jokes, Christians should honor those whom the Lord has blessed. And it is also important that a Christian husband honor his wife in tangible ways. (p. 124)

Wilson explains that many women feel dowdy and unkempt as their bodies grow larger. As much as he is able, the Christian man should see to it that the woman can dress in nice clothes, particularly during pregnancy. Regarding using birth control out of fear for large families:

Some couples who do not use birth control have ten children, some have three, and some have not been blessed with any. The Bible teaches that the number is not the result of chance; the Lord is the One who opens and closes wombs. I am not arguing here that birth control is unlawful. But Christians who use birth control must not do so because they accept the lies of pagans who have a low view of children. (p. 125)

Summing up how a Christian husband ought to treat his wife:

So to keep his wife encouraged, a husband's top priority should be her spiritual and emotional contentment. She should be in her prayers, and she should know that she is. She should be frequently held, comforted, counseled, and taught by her husband from the Word of God. While some in the world may despise her calling and vocation, she should be praised in it often by a grateful husband. It is truly a high calling. (p. 125)

Regarding birth control, Wilson argues that certain kinds are clearly wrong for any person to use. We cannot kill. This includes abortion, but it also includes certain "birth control" devices, such as the "morning after pill" or the IUD. These prevent the fertilized egg from implanting, and thus are taking a life after conception.

Wilson tells the story of a fictional couple who want to use birth control because kids are a hassle and they want to focus on their careers. He cites this as an example of where the motives behind wanting to use birth control are wrong.

Another example has a couple with six children going on birth control because they want to be able to properly take care of the six blessings they have with the care the Bible requires. Wilson states that this couple may be mistaken (that they can't handle a seventh) but at least their attitude is not one of sinful rebellion against God's proclamation that children are good.

Because the Bible says nothing about birth control itself, we must evaluate the action based upon whether the action is motivated by a biblical attitude toward that which the Bible does address – children and family. (p. 127)

Nowhere in the Bible does it say that the use of birth control is sinful. So it is wrong to say that it is. The Bible does consistently say that children are a blessing from the Lord. And it is a sin to say or act as though they are not. (p.129)

Chapter 9: Divorce and Remarriage

Wilson defines divorce as the "dissolution of a marriage" (p. 131).

He goes on to argue against that teaching that sex makes a marriage.

A marriage does not exist simply because a couple has become one flesh. Paul uses the term *one flesh* in describing a man's relationship with a prostitute (1 Cor. 6:16), which is obviously not a marriage. (p. 131)

Wilson argues that not all divorce is sin.

Because God hates divorce, it is not surprising that some have concluded that divorce is *always* a sin. Unfortunately, this position does not do justice to all the biblical teaching on the subject. Of course, it is *always* sin for at least one of the marriage partners. It is usually a sin for both. Nevertheless, it is sometimes an act of righteousness for the offended and innocent party. This does not mean that divorce is automatically legitimate for the innocent party. It can be legitimate, but frequently is not. (pp. 131-132)

I should say that I do not completely agree with all of Wilson's examples in this chapter. They are in the book and you are free to read them and prayerfully come up with your own understanding.

For example, Wilson says it's okay for a woman to divorce her non-Christian husband if he has been living the homosexual lifestyle for the past 5 years. There is no doubt that this would be a horrible burden to bear, but even so I do not see where a Christian has any right to seek a divorce when the non-Christian does not want one.

1 Corinthians 7:12-15

- 12 If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away.
- 13 And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him.
- 14 For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.
- 15 But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace.

My understanding is that a Christian must stay with an unbeliever for as long as the unbeliever is willing to stay. I cite Hosea as an example. He had to live with a wife who was a prostitute – a burden no one would want to bear. But God called Hosea to be faithful to his unbelieving wife, even though she was an adulterer.

Wilson makes an intriguing argument for divorce when the spouse has done something worthy of the death penalty. His reasoning goes like this: a woman is married to a man who has committed murder. They live in a liberal state that puts him in jail for life, rather than executing him. By God's law he should have been executed, in which case the wife would have been free from the marriage by virtue of his death. But the state refused to carry out God's law. Why should she be bound to him in marriage because she lives in a liberal state? Therefore, according to Wilson, divorce is allowed in this case.

I'm not convinced that the unwillingness of the state to fully carry out God's judgment (execution) means that we are allowed to therefore commit acts that otherwise would not be allowed (divorcing an unbeliever who does not want a divorce.)

Wilson says: "So while it is true that Christians are not supposed to divorce their non-Christian spouses, this only applies if the non-Christian is willing to be married within God's boundaries" (p. 137).

I wonder what "within God's boundaries" means, and I struggle to find that in Scripture. I fear it is a slippery slope, and certainly would have allowed Hosea to divorce Gomer.

Since I've already given my understanding of Scripture in regard to divorce between a Christian and a non-Christian, I will now make my case why divorce between Christians is never allowed under any circumstances in Scripture. This does not come from Wilson's book. This is my understanding, and it was greatly influenced by a sermon series my pastor, Bob Burrelli, preached a few years back.

We must understand that we need to seek the counsel of all of Scripture when we seek to have an understanding of a doctrine. I believe a key to understanding why divorce must never be allowed between Christians is the following:

1 Corinthians 6:1,5-7

- 1 Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?
- 5 I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren?
- 6 But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers.
- 7 Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another.

Christians are never to bring other Christians before secular authorities. It is an embarrassment to Christ and a shame to us. Like it or not, we find ourselves in a society that manages divorces through the secular authorities.

Moses and Jesus both allowed for divorce between believers under certain circumstances, but in their day divorce was a matter dealt with by the priesthood through the Temple. It was a religious matter. Today this is not the case. In order to divorce today, one must bring a believer before the secular authorities, and Paul says this should not be.

God's law has not changed – our society has. In Jesus and Moses' day, divorce did not require bringing another believer before the secular authorities. Today it does. There is no divorce between believers under any circumstances under this condition.

But what about when Christians spouses do really awful things? Say a husband is regularly beating up the wife and kids?

Here is where the church's often-unwillingness to Biblically administer church discipline fails us. Jesus ordained church discipline, specifically excommunication, in Matthew chapter 18.

Matthew 18:15-17

- 15 Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.
- 16 But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.
- 17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.

If a Christian husband were mistreating his wife and kids, the husband must be confronted. If he were to repent, (change his behavior), then this would truly be wonderful! If he should not, then you would approach him with some other church members, and you all explain to him that he has been disobeying the Lord. It must be communicated to him the necessity of repentance immediately.

Should he not repent, then the church would confront him. If he still did not repent, then, according to Jesus in Matthew 18:17, he would be excommunicated. In short, you would treat him as though he were an unbeliever.

Now that he is to be treated as an unbeliever, the Christian wife in this case may righteously bring him before secular authorities for a restraining order at the very least and even a divorce. The wife had done due diligence to save the marriage without transgressing God's principals.

One area where Wilson and I definitely agree is in the fact that even if a divorce does happen the way God has prescribed, it is not a happy occasion at all.

Epilogue

It is my desire that my esteem for this book and thankfulness to Douglas Wilson be evidently clear. This synopsis is not meant to be a substitute for reading this very worthwhile book. On the contrary, I highly recommend everyone, whether married or not, to purchase this book and consider the truths therein.

This book is not merely for married couples, or even engaged couples. We live in a time when even those in the church do not know how to Biblically behave in marriage. Even single brothers and sisters in Christ will no doubt run into a married Christian who is struggling. This book will equip the single Christian to help the married one. In this, we bear one another's' burdens, and Christ is glorified!

In closing, I include notable quotations from the Epilogue of the book.

Our culture is characterized by men who are embarrassed to be men. (p. 141)

We have sought, with all the wisdom of foolish men, to replace the hardness of masculinity with the tenderness of women. (p. 141)

As we pray for the reformation of marriage, we must pray that the Christian husband comes to renew or make some basic covenantal commitments before the Lord.

He must first decide that he will thoroughly acquaint himself with the Bible's teaching on marriage, headship, and the family, and that he will gladly submit to it, and put it into practice in his home...

He will love his wife as Christ loved the church, giving himself up for her. He will assume responsibility for her loveliness.

He will not place any responsibility for the spiritual, emotional, physical, and financial condition of his household on his parents, wife, children, church, or society. He will assume, before the Lord, all responsibility for the home he represents before God, and will pray for the grace to stand.

He will not allow his children to be taught, educated, or raised by men and women who live and teach in rebellion against God. He will remove his children from the government schools and educate them at home or in a godly school.

He will not take his wife away from her primary duties as a mother and manager of the home. He will bring her home to the children, the place God ordained for her to be, and he will encourage and love her in that vocation. He will establish her in the place where she can attain greatness, and when she has attained it, he will rise up and call her blessed.

He will not mistake the love for his wife that God requires of him with the counterfeit "niceness" that abdicates his responsibility for leadership.

He will teach his wife the Word of God, and together they will teach their children.

He will work hard so that his wife is able to clothe and feed the family.

He will be devoted to his wife sexually, treating her with understanding and wisdom.

He will set the tone of his home through patience, reverence, dignity, kindness, and courtesy.

And he will thank God for His mercy, through the Lord Jesus Christ. (pp. 143-144)