

Biblical Counseling Center introduces eCounselor's Weekly guide, to encourage counselors and all believers in discipleship and daily growth.

### Marriage - Vertical or Horizontal?

By Ron and Sherry Allchin

February's emphasis on loving relationships naturally makes us think about marriage as horizontal between man and wife. But over the years of counseling couples, we have repeatedly realized if the marriage isn't first vertical, it will never fulfill its design horizontally to satisfy the couple by pointing themselves and others to Christ as they live in their marriage roles.



You've heard Eph 5:22-33 at weddings and couples' seminars. The Word is clear about vertical marriages, yet there is a disconnect in the practice and daily application for most of us in the horizontal. When we understand the picture of marriage in Scripture, it begins through union with Christ our Bridegroom who models the role of husband, the head. He then tells us as the church, the body of Christ, to follow His leadership as the Bride of Christ. An earthly picture we can see and understand teaches us a spiritual truth. But conversely, the heavenly picture shows us how to live in our earthly marriages.

**Would our marriages be different if we practiced the picture of Christ as the loving leader, the Bridegroom who so loved his bride that He gave His life for her (Jn 3:16)?**

**Husbands**, how can you love your wife more? You will likely not be asked to give your life for her, but what will you sacrifice if you love her even as much as you love yourself? Would you sacrifice the Super Bowl? Or give her the safer car? Would you sacrifice your "chill time" to spend time with her? When husbands put more emphasis on the love role, the lead role flows more easily for both the man and his wife. The command to love your wife is in Ephesians many more times than direction to lead her. Husbands are instructed to provide for her, to protect her, to know her intimately in all realms of her life, to be loyal and faithful to her, to comfort her. He is to lead her spiritually, teaching her, praying for her, encouraging her spiritual maturity. These roles flow naturally as a result of love for God and love for her.

**Wives**, what would be different in your marriage if you truly believed that loving and serving your husband was as important as loving and serving Christ? Honoring and obeying the Lord requires also honoring and obeying your own husband. I've often told wives, "You must honor your husband even if he's not always honorable," to which I get a quick, "But how can I do that?" You honor your husband as though you were honoring Christ, and then you pray that he will grow into those shoes and become more Christlike in every way. That one simple concept can make a major attitude adjustment for wives. If a wife focuses on all that her husband is failing to do, then bitterness grows against him, breaking joy and fellowship both horizontally and vertically. She resents her wifely duties and it continues downhill from there.

When a wife treats her husband in an honorable way, most men often will rise to the occasion and adore his wife as the helper that she is. Wives, we were created for companionship (Gen 2:18) to be the friend, lover, helper our husband needs; because he, in God's image, craves our fellowship. Look at your day's agenda, or even your life's agenda, to see whom your life is about. If it is about self, you will never experience the joy God intended for you in either your vertical relationship with God or in your horizontal relationship with your husband. When each spouse horizontally lives in the Biblical roles modeled by God to us vertically, then great joy and fulfillment characterize our relationships and draw others to Christ through the picture of our marriages.

In our living room are these words: **Home - Where each Lives for the Other and All live for God.**

Our marriage verse: **O Magnify the Lord with me and let us exalt His Name together (Ps 34:3).**

#### Biblical Counseling Center

[Main Office](#) - 3233 N Arlington Heights Rd, Suite 302 • Arlington Heights IL 60004

[Fox Lake Office](#), Fox Lake Community Church • [Lynwood Office](#), Lynwood United Reformed Church

Email [info@biblicalcounselingcenter.org](mailto:info@biblicalcounselingcenter.org) • Telephone (847) 398-7193

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