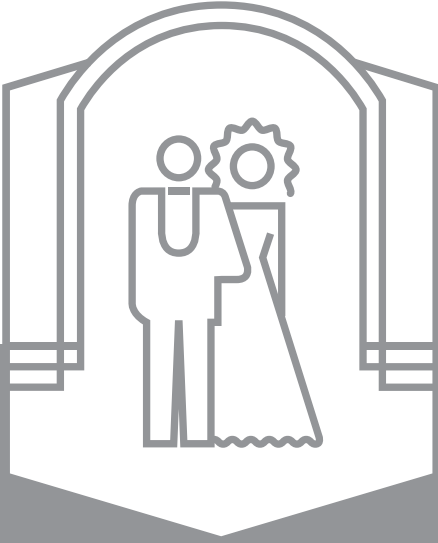


6

A 6-SESSION STUDY
FOR DIALOGUE IN
COMMUNITY AROUND
THE SCRIPTURES



ENJOYING YOUR RELATIONSHIP

First Principles of Marriage

BY JEFF REED

© Jeff Reed, 1998, 2002, 2014

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or any other) except for brief quotations in printed reviews, without the prior permission of the publisher.

Published by BILD International, Ames, Iowa 50014. Bild International resources are designed to help churches train leaders.

All Scripture, unless otherwise noted, is from the New American Standard Bible.

ISBN 1-891441-04-3

TABLE OF CONTENTS

05

ENJOYING
YOUR
RELATIONSHIP

07

INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES:
Becoming Established in Our Faith - 7
Design of the Series - 8
Design of the Study Guides - 10

13

SESSION 1
CULTURAL
CONFUSION—
MARRIAGE REDEFINED

23

SESSION 2
GOD'S BASIC
DESIGN FOR
MARRIAGE

32

SESSION 3
SPIRIT OF A
MARRIAGE

41

SESSION 4
MARRIAGE AND
COMMUNITY LIFE

50

SESSION 5
BUILDING
INTERGENERATIONAL
COMMITMENT

59

SESSION 6
RESHAPING
OUR LIVES

64

GLOSSARY OF
KEY BIBLICAL
TERMS AND
CONCEPTS

66

LIFELONG
LEARNING

67

ENDNOTES

CULTURAL CONFUSION — MARRIAGE REDEFINED **1**

As we mentioned in the introduction, the contemporary family is going through radical redefinition. This redefinition is affecting or will affect almost every culture in the world. The essence of this redefinition is found in the marriage relationship. Not only are roles being radically redefined, but so is the very essence of manhood and womanhood—masculinity and femininity. The effect of all of this is devastating to the local church and, therefore, to carrying out the Great Commission of Jesus Christ. In this session, we will examine the effect on individual families of not following Christ’s design for His household, the local church. We have chosen to examine a passage that clearly sets forth the relationship between the guidelines for His household—a family of families—and the stability of individual families. Titus 1:10-16, an often-unknown passage, gives us the key to the relationship between Christ’s instructions for individual family units, including marriage, and for His churches and thus for His overall purpose and mission. Those bringing a different teaching were accused by Paul of upsetting whole families. Let’s examine this passage carefully to understand why this teaching is so important.



Study the Scriptures

READ THE PASSAGE: TITUS 1:10-16

Think Through the Questions:

1. What was “upsetting whole families”?
2. What does it mean to be “sound in the faith”?
3. Why did many of the Cretan believers need to be rebuked to be sound in the faith?
How had their culture affected them after their conversion?
4. In this context, in what sense were those bringing a different teaching rebellious?

Summarize the Core Teaching of the Passage:

Write a paragraph, outline, annotate, or chart your conclusions— whatever best communicates for you. Be sure to comment on the relationship between a different teaching and “upsetting whole families.”

Core teaching of Titus 1:10-16



Consult the Scholars

The following comments are designed to help you better understand the passage and to stimulate your thinking on the implications of the teaching.

Read and Reflect on this Brief Commentary on Titus 1:10-16:

This is a very interesting passage when considered in its context. Remember, Paul wrote to Titus to direct him to complete the process of establishing the new churches that were planted on the island of Crete. Paul gave him a set of household instructions for the local church family to live by. In the passage immediately preceding our passage, Titus 1:5-9, he instructed Titus to appoint elders in every church. Two specific things (among many others) were to be true of these elders. They were to do a good job leading their own

households, and they were to stand firm in the faith, able to exhort and correct those who contradicted it. This leads to Titus 1:10-16, where they had to deal with those who were upsetting the very families they were trying to establish in the faith.

The elders needed to be sound because there were those out there, and even within the churches, who were rebellious. Evidently, in Paul's day, the island of Crete was a rather rough, undisciplined culture. The ethics were bad in the country as well, with little respect shown for authority, honesty, or even law. As we know today, it is possible for whole cultures to become dishonest. The Cretans were becoming known as such a culture. There were some who were preying on the young churches, attempting to get them to stop listening to Paul and his team and to listen to them instead. Evidently, they were after some sort of personal gain. Regardless of their teaching, it contradicted Paul's; consequently, it was upsetting the faith of whole families. Rather than majoring on sound living, sound families, and relationships, as emphasized by Paul in Titus, they were trying to get these families to focus on doctrinal differences, the law, and superstitious myths.

What all is included in "the teaching" (v.9) of Paul and the other Apostles? It covers everything written in the letters of Paul and the other Apostles that is included in the New Testament. The specific topic at hand is ordering the household of faith. Remember from our studies in *Belonging to a Family of Families*, there is a form of literature called *household texts*. There are two types of household texts—community and immediate family. The context of Titus is a community household text. In other words, it is written for the purpose of instruction on how a local household community, a local church, should be structured. 1 & 2 Timothy are also community household texts. Titus assumes that the principles from the individual household texts, on ordering individual families, are being followed as well. (See *Belonging to a Family of Families*.)

So how does this all tie together? Those who brought another teaching were upsetting whole families. They were either rebellious to the teaching or attempting to contradict it with another teaching. In this context, *sound teaching* means "teaching lived out in the local church community and in the family according to the Master's instructions." Thus any teaching that regards it as outdated, culturally irrelevant, or undermines or contradicts it in any way would be considered as ultimately undermining the establishing process of believers. It is also important to note that the instructions for how we are to live in our families and in the local church family, which are directly referred to as sound teaching, are essential for the progress of the gospel.

Today a new philosophy has entered the church that truly upsets whole families. As mentioned in the introduction, the family itself is being redefined. The instructions of these household texts and the order they establish within individual households and ultimately the household of faith are being undermined at every turn. These instructions are considered outdated. New words are surfacing such as *egalitarian* and *feminism*, and old terms such as *patriarchal* are cast as outdated and controlling. The biblical concepts of

manhood and *womanhood* are not even addressed. Issues are confused, families are upset and fragmenting, and our churches, in many cases, are all but rendered ineffective!

Read and Reflect on Key Quotes:

The following two quotes are taken from *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood* edited by John Piper and Wayne Grudem. This book is a compilation of many authors who have carefully written to defend the biblical teaching on marriage and the family, as found in the New Testament. The writers are all part of an outstanding modern day church council called Council for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood. The first quote is by John Piper, who serves as a pastor in Minneapolis and who has written several significant works focusing on God and His work in our lives. It appears in chapter one, “A Vision of Biblical Complementarity: Manhood and Womanhood Defined According to the Bible.”

“The tendency today is to stress the equality of men and women by minimizing the unique significance of our maleness or femaleness. But this depreciation of male and female personhood is a great loss. It is taking a tremendous toll on generations of young men and women who do not know what it means to be a man or a woman. Confusion over the meaning of sexual personhood today is epidemic. The consequence of this confusion is not a happy and free harmony among gender-free persons relating on the basis of abstract competencies. The consequence rather is more divorce, more homosexuality, more sexual abuse, more promiscuity, more social awkwardness, and more emotional distress and suicide that come with the loss of God-given identity.

“It is a remarkable and telling observation that contemporary Christian feminists devote little attention to the definition of masculinity and femininity. Little help is being given to a son’s question, ‘Dad, What does it mean to be a man and not a woman?’ Or a daughter’s question, ‘Mom, what does it mean to be a woman and not a man?’ A lot of energy is being expended today minimizing the distinctions of manhood and womanhood. But we do not hear very often what manhood and womanhood *should* incline us to do. We are adrift in a sea of confusion over sexual roles. And life is not the better for it....

“The conviction behind this chapter is that the Bible does not leave us in ignorance about the meaning of masculine and feminine personhood. God has not placed in us an all-pervasive and all-conditioning dimension of personhood and then hidden the meaning of our identity from us. He has shown us in Scripture the beauty of manhood and womanhood in complimentary harmony. He has shown us the distortions and even the horrors that sin has made of fallen manhood and womanhood. And he has shown us the way of redemption and healing through Christ.

“To be sure, we ‘see through a glass dimly.’ Our knowledge is not perfect. We must be ever open to new light. But we are not so adrift as to have nothing to say to our generation about the meaning of manhood and womanhood and its implications for our relationships. Our understanding is that the Bible reveals the nature of masculinity and

femininity by describing diverse responsibilities for man and woman while rooting these differing responsibilities in creation, not convention.

“When the Bible teaches that men and women fulfill different roles in relation to each other, charging men with a unique leadership role, it bases this difference not on contemporary cultural norms but on permanent facts of creation. This is seen in 1 Corinthians 11:3-16 (especially vv. 8-9, 14); Ephesians 5:21-33 (especially vv. 31-32); and 1 Timothy 2:11-14 (especially vv. 13-14). In the Bible, differentiated roles for men and women are never traced back to the fall of man and woman into sin. Rather, the foundation of this differentiation is traced back to the way things were in Eden before sin warped our relationships. Differentiated roles were corrupted, not created, by the fall. They were created by God.”¹

The second quote is by Elisabeth Elliott, who has served as a missionary in Ecuador, where her husband was killed by those whom he was evangelizing. She has written many excellent books on the role of women and developing commitment as Christians. She is truly one of the godliest older women writing today. This quote appears in “The Essence of Femininity: A Personal Perspective,” which is also found in *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood*.

“Feminists are dedicated to the proposition that the difference between men and women is a matter of mere biology. The rest of us recognize a far deeper reality, one that meets us on an altogether different plane from mere anatomical distinctions. It is unfathomable and indefinable, yet men and women have tried ceaselessly to fathom and define it. It is unavoidable and undeniable, yet in the past couple of decades earnest and high-sounding efforts have been made in the name of decency, equality, and fairness, at least to avoid it and, whenever possible, to deny it. I refer, of course, to femininity—a reality of God’s design, and God’s making, His gift to me and to every woman—and, in a very different way, His gift to men as well. If we really understood what femininity is all about, perhaps the question of roles would take care of itself.

“What I have to say is not validated by my having a graduate degree or a position on the faculty or administration of an institution of higher learning. It comes not from any set of personal tastes and preferences. It is not a deduction from my own genetic leanings or temperament. Instead, it is what I see as the arrangement of the universe and the full harmony and tone of Scripture. This arrangement is a glorious hierarchical order of graduated splendor, beginning with the Trinity, descending through seraphim, cherubim, archangels, angels, men, and all lesser creatures, a mighty universal dance, choreographed for the perfection and fulfillment of each participant.

“For years I have watched with growing dismay, even anguish, what has been happening in our society, in our educational system, in our churches, in our homes, and on the deepest level of personality, as a result of a movement called feminism, a movement that gives a great deal of consideration to something called personhood, but very little to

womanhood, and hardly a nod to femininity. Words like *manhood* and *masculinity* have been expunged from our vocabulary, and we have been told in no uncertain terms that we ought to forget about such things, which amount to nothing more than biology, and concentrate on what it means to be ‘persons.’

“...Perhaps it should not surprise us that secular higher education has long since discarded the image of femininity as utterly irrelevant to anything that really matters, but it is calamitous when Christian higher education follows suit. This is what is happening. Shortly before he died, Francis Schaeffer said, ‘Tell me what the world is saying today, and I’ll tell you what the church will be saying seven years from now.’

“It is my observation—and, I may add, my experience—that Christian higher education, trotting happily along in the train of feminist crusaders, is willing and eager to treat the subject of *feminism*, but gags on the word *femininity*. Maybe it regards the subject as trivial or unworthy of academic inquiry. Maybe the real reason is that its basic premise is feminism. Therefore it simply cannot cope with femininity.

“Secular philosophy comes at us daily with terrible force, and we need Paul’s admonition to the Roman Christians, ‘Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold, but let God remake you so that your whole attitude of mind is changed’ (Romans 12:2, *Phillips*). Feminist philosophy, which sounds reasonable enough on the surface, is a subtle and pervasive poison, infecting the minds of Christians and non-Christians alike.”²



Record any insights from the brief commentary and quotes:

— continued



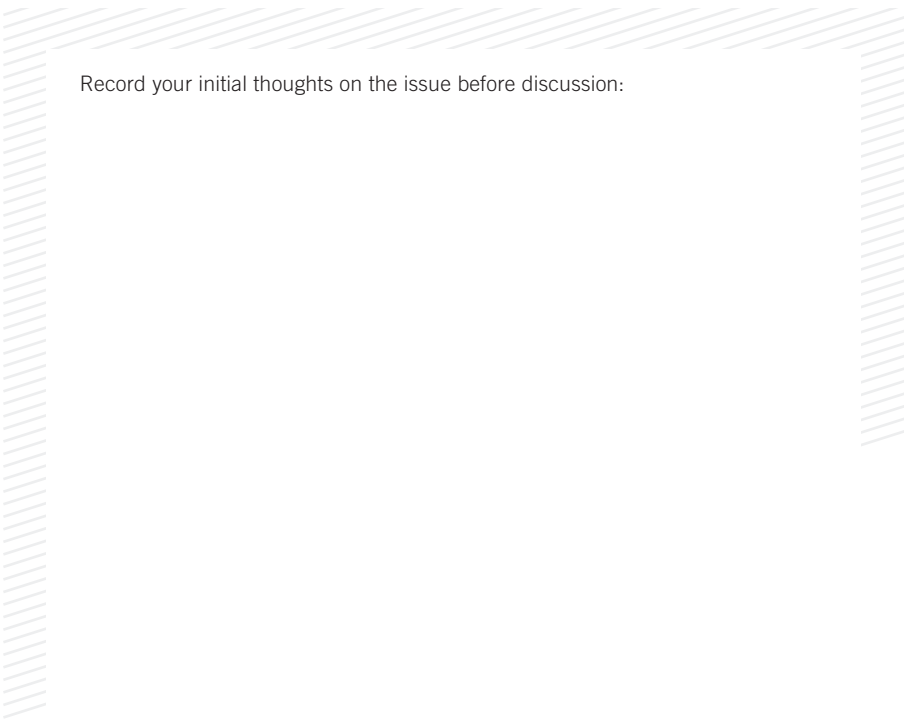
Think Through the Issues

Society today is radically redefining marriage, even to the level of reshaping our understanding of biblical manhood and womanhood. It is easy to begin adopting the ideas of culture without even thinking about them. In fact, anyone who doesn't accept the principles of culture is often regarded as somewhat different, someone who is backwards or out of date. This can put pressure on our marriages and the raising of our children. In this issue, we will examine the implications of building marriages on the first principles of Christ rather than on those of the world around us.

ISSUE: Modern marriages and the first principles

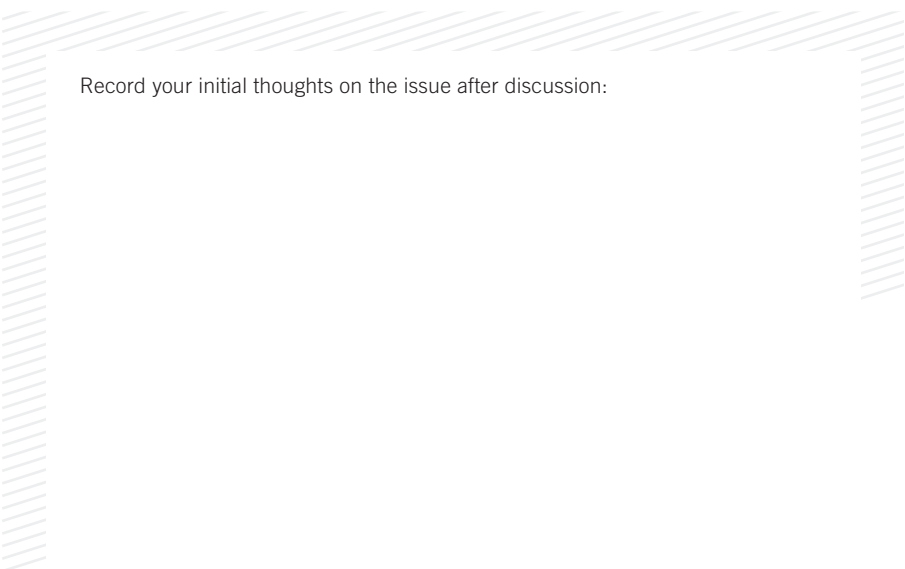
Think Through the Issue Before Discussion:

1. What major influences have shaped your philosophy of marriage?
2. What if you discover that Christ's design for marriage is significantly different from your philosophy? Different from what culture idealizes?
3. Why would Christ even care about how we structure our marriage relationships? How we define our roles and responsibilities?
4. What might be some of the implications of moving a direction that is different from how culture defines the marriage relationship?



Record your initial thoughts on the issue before discussion:

Discuss the issue in your small group.



Record your initial thoughts on the issue after discussion:



Apply the Principles

It is now time to respond to what you have studied and discussed. Take your time on this section.

Think Back Through the First Three Steps.


Design an Application for Your Life.

In light of the direction culture is moving, think through your marriage to gain a sense of the degree to which contemporary culture is defining your marriage. Purpose to examine your marriage in light of Christ's design for His household and for the families and marriages that make up His family. As a disciple, reaffirm your commitment to building every phase of your life around the first principles of Christ.

Design Intergenerational Applications.

You need to think through these issues whether you are married or not. How can you encourage your children and grandchildren to affirm these principles in their marriages? If you are divorced, how can you affirm Christ's design for marriage in your children? If you are a young adult, you need to affirm this design now so you will build your future marriage on God's design. If you are single, how can you envision using these principles with the people around you—at work, in your neighborhood, in your extended family and church family—to encourage them in their marriages and possibly to give them a glimpse of the Christ that you follow?

There are two aspects to the assigned project. First, evaluate the forces that have shaped your philosophy of marriage. Second, reaffirm your commitment to building your marriage, and/or to helping others build their marriages, on the first principles of Christ. Your evaluation and reaffirmation:



— continued