

CHRISTIAN IDEALS IN MARRIAGE AND SEX

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# OUTLINE

## INTRODUCTION

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ADDENDUM

CHRISTIAN IDEALS IN MARRIAGE AND SEX

1. Page 2 Insert after 3rd paragraph: "However, the significance of the marriage ceremony is not to be minimized, for it gives legal and social sanction to the marriage union. Any sexual relationships before wedlock must be considered as ~~being~~ ~~illieit~~. A Church wedding, with its emphasis on the sanctity of the divine institution of marriage, is highly desirable."
2. Page 3 in the last paragraph: (a) In the first line insert "alone" after "love." (b) Delete the second sentence. (c) Delete the last sentence.
3. Page 4, the first sentence of the first paragraph should read: "The marriage ceremony, which is <sup>required</sup> sanctioned by the state and <sup>approved</sup> by society, provides the proper <sup>sanction</sup> basis for that "mystic" union which occurs when man and wife come together in conjugal relationship."
4. Page 5 under "c" under (1) "sex love", insert after "personality" the last 3 sentences under (2) "No doubt many couples . . . a semi-~~god~~."
- Under (2) "Personal love", read: "This love goes farther than sex love. It is a love in which a 'give and take' attitude exists between the marriage partners and which seeks ~~the~~ mutual satisfaction." (The sentence beginning with "It is love . . . egotism" should be deleted.
5. Page 7 subpoint (3) should read: "That the desire for sexual union outside of the marriage relationships is adultery."
6. Page 12 delete subpoint (3).
7. Page 13 subpoint "d". Delete the 4 subpoints under "d" and let "d" read: "Birth control practiced for selfish reasons and with false motives, such as love of wealth, luxury, and ease, and to avoid the ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ discomforts of pregnancy, painful child birth and child care, are always contrary to God's will.
- Subpoint "e" should read: "It would appear that the most natural and ~~the~~ noble method of control would be by means of periodic abstinence." (all the rest of the paragraph is to be omitted). From this it follows, that subpoint (1) be deleted, as well as the sentence in subpoint (4) "When children are . . . God sent."

## INTRODUCTION:

In this study we are attempting to give some attention to the large field of human experience known as the marriage relationship. While our church has had something to say about marriage, it has had less to say about sex. As a whole we have shied away from the subject of sex and have tried to avoid facing the questions and problems which arise in this area. Dr. W. G. Cole makes the indictment, "The Church's handling of sex is one of the darkest strands in Christian history."<sup>1</sup> Because the church has often been silent on the subject, its members have turned to other sources for counsel and advice. There has developed in our day a "secular priesthood". Discovering that the church, and particularly its clergy, has little to say on the subject, young men and women have sought out secular psychologists, psychiatrists, psychoanalysts, and professional marriage counselors. Boys and girls often gather their sex education from obscene literature and books available at the corner drugstore. In this area of marriage and sex the message of the church has been uncertain and certainly not prophetic. So in the midst of modern frustration and confusion as to love, marriage, and sex, we seek now to sharpen our understanding and trust by God's grace to see more clearly the Christian way in marriage relationships. We plan to discuss this subject in two parts. I. The Christian Ideal in Marriage, and II. The Christian Ideal in Sex Life.

### I. THE CHRISTIAN IDEAL IN MARRIAGE

Is there such a thing as "Christian" marriage? Is not marriage meant for all people, whether Christian or non-Christian? Quite so. Marriage is a "natural" thing, and not confined to Christians at all. It might be better therefore to speak of marriage as understood by, practiced by, and demanded of, Christians. The fact remains that in our world there are secular marriages and Christian marriages. However, for purposes of clarity, we shall speak now of the Christian Ideal in Marriage.

What people think and make of marriage matters greatly. A culture can partly be determined by what people think and do about marriage. Elton Trueblood says, "Marriage is a window thru which the meaning of human existence shines with unusual brilliance."<sup>2</sup> Christianity has little to say about love, and not much about sex, but it has much to say about marriage.<sup>3</sup> The specific question now is what constitutes the Christian Ideal in Marriage?

→ *See addendum*

1. In marriage God is seen to fulfill his creative purposes. The Bible sets forth at least three major purposes for marriage.

a. The first purpose for marriage is fellowship. God said in the dawn of creation, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make

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<sup>1</sup>"The Christian Gospel and Sex" in Report of the Consultation of Christian Educators on Sex Education, Page 1.

<sup>2</sup>Trueblood, Common Ventures of Life.

<sup>3</sup>Wylie, Human Nature and Christian Marriage, Page 37.

him an help-meet for him" (Genesis 2:18). What was God going to give to the man? An "help-meet". A helper fitted for him "his counter part—one like himself in form and constitution, disposition, and affections and altogether suitable to his nature and wants."<sup>4</sup> Purely and simply God had in mind that man should have communion. God is a God of fellowship. And he provided for fellowship in his creatures. It is not good that man should be alone. Therefore, he must needs have a companion with whom he can commune and thru whom they mutually can achieve the higher goals of life.

Now it is significant to note that when God provided a companion for Adam he did not give him another man, but a woman! "The fact that the man receives a female companion, and not another male shows that sex character and the sex desires are regarded as significant and valuable, primarily from the standpoint of fellowship."<sup>5</sup>

The matter of fact is that in sexual union, man achieves the deepest kind of human fellowship possible. Note the words used by our Lord. "But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife. And they twain shall be one flesh: So then they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder" (Mark 10:6-9). The sexual union of husband and wife make them truly one flesh. It is a relationship which binds them for life. Let no man put assunder what God hath joined. Somehow God is deeply involved in his creative world when man and woman come together in marriage relationship. It is indeed a mystery, yet a fact. In a valid marriage the "one-flesh" union comes to reality. What does it mean, "What God hath joined together"? It does not mean that one John Fisher and Mary Jones have been joined by God. But it does mean that the man--woman--one-flesh relationship of any couple who have entered matrimony are knit together in an insoluble union. "Only that which God makes is in the end real; we say that here is something--the man--woman relationship of marriage unity which is made by God and not only by man."<sup>6</sup> The conjugal union is a fulfillment of God's order. So real and so intimate is their experience that it is a work of God, and is an experience in which man reaches companionship otherwise unattainable in this life. For this cause (and this is the cause) shall a man leave father and mother (previous fellowship and companionship.) Later Jesus used this kind of fellowship between husband and wife as an illustration of the meeting in heaven of the church and the Savior, it will be like a marriage! (Revelation 19:7-9).

▷ See addendum

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Insert.

b. The second reason for marriage is to give man opportunity to have part in the procreation of the race. When Adam and Eve had been created God said, "Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it" (Genesis 1:28). Again after the flood God instructed Noah to beget children, "And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them,

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minimized, for it gives legal and social sanction to the marriage union. Any

<sup>4</sup>Jamieson Commentary, Vol. I, Page 44.

<sup>5</sup>Piper, Christian Intersp. of Sex, Page 47.

<sup>6</sup>Wylie, Human Nature and Christian Marriage, Page 42. *sexual relationships before wedlock must be considered, as a church*

*wedding, with its emphasis on the sanctity of the divine institution of marriage, is highly desirable.*

be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth" (Genesis 9:1). Then came the promises of blessing when children are begotten, "Lo, Children are an heritage of the Lord, and the fruit of the womb is his reward" (Psalm 127:3). Finally Paul gives instructions like in I Timothy 5:14, "I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully."

Children are always regarded as a blessing in the Scriptures. Whoever has had children as a result of marriage has truly had a high privilege and has entered into sacred obligations.

c. The third reason for marriage is to protect men and women from sin. In this, also, God fulfills His purpose and ideal for man. Having created them male and female they contain within themselves the hot and stormy desire of passion and sex. This is indeed a natural and legitimate desire. We should never regard sex as unclean or filthy. Only when it is abused does it become sinful. We should give boys and girls and young people more and better sex education.

Our God has provided marriage so that our natural desires can be properly and creatively used. "Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. . . . But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn" (I Corinthians 7:2,3,8). Through marriage God shows man a way to a life of purity and satisfactions amidst his temptations and passionate desires. In God's plan, then, marriage offers man companionship, creativity, and protection.

## 2. The Christian Ideal In Marriage assumes a certain nature for marriage.

a. Christian marriage assumes permanency. In marriage a certain status of relationship is established, and this status is by nature permanent. While marriage has a legal aspect, and a contract element in it, it is basically a spiritual union. Marriage provides a binding structure, a skeleton, or framework within which this relationship can grow and mature.

The basis of this permanency <sup>is not</sup> ~~is~~ love. <sup>alone</sup> (Love alone is not sufficient ground for marriage.) ~~Love in our society, is much exaggerated and is too often the sole reason for marriages.~~ "The trouble and confusion of the present world arises from the fact that while Christianity concentrates on marriage our culture concentrates almost entirely upon love." Generally it is believed that when people fall in love with someone, one ought never to nor is ever free to marry. This situation should challenge the church to define the meaning and place of love in life and marriage. ~~(The Bible says more about love after marriage than about love before marriage.)~~

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<sup>7</sup>Wylie, Human Nature and Christian Marriage, Page 39.

The marriage ceremony, which is a sacrament of the church, provides the proper sanction for that mystic union which occurs when men and wife come together in conjugal relationship.

-4-  
See addendum

The permanency of marriage is based upon that "mystic" union which occurs when man and wife come together in conjugal relationship. The Bible speaks of this as "knowing" the other person. (Genesis 4:16, 26, and others). Thru sex one comes to know another and thereby to know something of the secret of his own existence. Through the physical act of marriage one has merged more completely with one's partner than is possible in any other human experience. This mysterious, but real spiritual union which has been established, cannot in truth be dissolved, even in divorce.

Now in a God directed marriage, love would have it no other way. True love says, I want you till death us do part. But love cannot alone be the basis for this union. Marriage is marriage and it does not depend upon love for its existence. Then it follows that if marriage is made by being married, and not by just being in love, then marriage is not unmade if love ceases. "Sex and romance and love are meant to be ingredients in the pudding of marriage. They are not snacks to be gobbled on the way."<sup>8</sup>

Thus in the Christian Ideal of Marriage all divorce is always contrary to God's will in marriage, because it is contrary to that which God makes in the marriage union. Let no man put asunder what God hath joined together.

b. Marriage assumes exclusiveness. It is actually not possible to "know", as the Bible says, more than one person. Promiscuity leads to frustration and delusion. God's purposes do not run along that line. True love and creative personality are produced as man and woman live in chastity and purity with one another. Gilbert Russell says, "A man cannot taste both the pleasures of promiscuity and the knowledge of what it means to be faithful in love."<sup>9</sup>

There is a real sense in which marriage remains a mystery. There is a real sense in which the sexual union is a sacrament for thru it a spiritual union is formed.<sup>10</sup>

This is an exclusiveness legitimate to those two who have come to "know" each other. ". . . Two persons have mutually revealed to each other the inner secret of their bodily being and by means of this knowledge they are now permanently and inseparably bound together."<sup>11</sup> And because the secret of sex is such an inner secret, it must not lose its sacred character.

### 3. The Ideal of Christian Marriage Assumes the call to Christian Virutes.

a. Christian marriage is a calling, a vocation. A Christian marries, not only because he has fallen love, but because he has found the will of God for him. After he has found the one he truly loves, and

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<sup>8</sup>Wylie, Page 47.

<sup>9</sup>Wylie, Page 51.

<sup>10</sup>Small, Design for Christian Marriage, Chapter 4.

<sup>11</sup>Piper, Christian Interp. of Sex, Page 60.

is free to marry, he also seeks God's will. It is clear from Scripture that not all shall marry. Matthew 19:12 says, "For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb; and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men; and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it." The Christian must ascertain God's will in the matter of marriage, just as much as those who have found it God's will for them not to marry.

In our generation love and romance have become idols, and marriage is often built on a gush of romantic infatuation. A Christian seeks God's will on his knees, not only in someone's arms! Truly, we should also say that falling in love mutually with someone you are free to marry is God's call to the vocation of marriage.

b. Christian marriage assumes a mission. Marriage, in the Christian sense, is not for the purpose of satisfying the respective parties alone, but marriage assumes responsibilities assigned to it by God. Major assignments of mission are: (1) To bring children into the world, (2) to rear and train children in the fear of God. For this purpose God has provided the family setting in which young life is to be nurtured and directed into God's ways. The family is God's appointed evangelist. Christian marriage assumes this mission.

c. Christian marriage assumes ideals to be followed. Christian marriage cultivates Christian love. We can differentiate between three kinds of love.

(1) Sex love. This is the desire or passion which seeks only the satisfaction of sex desire, and disregards the consequent effects upon personality. Sex desires are not only the desires and impulses of the sex organs and their functions, but are rather the needs of the whole person. Hence, any attempt to gratify the sex desire only is sinful because such an attempt seeks to divorce sex from its meaning for the whole personality. Since it does not fulfill the formative and constructial purposes, it is sinful (Matthew 5:27-30).

*no doubt many couples never get much farther than erotic love. Much of what the world calls love is erotic love. The marriage partner is simply a semi-god.*

(2) Personal love. This love goes a step farther than sex love. It is a love for the marriage partner which it is hoped will bring him satisfaction. It is love for the purpose of personal gain. It is erotic love, and not agape love, and therefore remains a form of egotism. No doubt many couples never get much farther than erotic love. Much of what the world calls love is erotic love. The marriage partner is simply a semi-god.

*This love goes farther than sex love. It is the love in which a "give and take" attitude exists between marriage partners and which seeks for mutual satisfaction.*

A group of young people were once asked the question, "What is wrong with the conception of love as usually given in films?" Their answer was straight and to the point. "Too much hand holding and too little housework."<sup>12</sup>

- (3) Christian love. In Christian love the marriage partner loves, not just for what he can get out of it, but because he desires to give his all. It is a passion for giving, not getting. Christian love is the love of God which transforms human love. "When a Christian couple experience the power of His love over their life together, then in their love for Christ is the bond of their oneness. . ."<sup>13</sup> In personal love a couple can achieve a "togetherness," but in Christian love the couple can come to a "oneness". In Christian love the center is not in each other, but in Christ. Christian love is not something they share in together. Peter expresses it thus, ". . . and as being heirs together of the grace of life, and that your prayers be not hindered" (I Peter 3:7).

*They do not have each other but they give themselves to each other.*

This then brings us to what the Bible envisions marriage to become. In Ephesians 5:24-25 "Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;" Christian marriage relationships are likened unto the communion which exists between Christ and the Church. The consummation of God's redemptive plan (as pictured in Revelation 19:7-9) is the marriage of the church to Christ our bridegroom. It is in this context that marriage is placed and this is indeed the Christian Ideal In Marriage.

## II. THE CHRISTIAN IDEALS IN SEX LIFE

### 1. The Bible and Sex.

a. In the Bible sex life is viewed as a part of the total divine plan of creation. Sex is not apart from God. It is not considered a matter of the flesh having no part in the divine plan. Dr. Piper says, "The feature that strikes the modern reader more than anything else in the biblical treatment of sex is the fact that, unlike modern writers, the Bible is not primarily concerned with problems of sexual discipline. . . but rather with the divine purpose manifesting itself in sex."<sup>14</sup>

Generally speaking the Bible teaches that sex life must not be considered apart from God's purposes. Sex is good, God made, but any use of sex which does not promote general spiritual ends is sinful. We must also notice that the biblical view of sex is based on the premise that man is a sinner, and that his sex life, as all of his life, stands in need of God's forgiveness and transforming grace.

b. Jesus taught regarding sex:

- (1) That sex is good, but it is not the most important thing in life. Some might be eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom

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<sup>13</sup>Small, Design for Christian Marriage, Page 70.

<sup>14</sup>Piper, Christian Interpretation of Sex, Page 8.

(Matthew 6:33, 19:12). All life, including sexual experience must be viewed in the light of its effect upon the Kingdom.

- (2) That in sexual intercourse two persons of different sex become joined in an indissoluble union (Mark 10:8-9).
- (3) That to desire sexual union <sup>outside of marriage is adultery.</sup> ~~with a person one is not free to marry is adultery~~ See appendix

Paul taught regarding sex:

- (1) That even as Jesus had taught, sex must be approached on the basis of an eschatological view of life as a whole.
- (2) That sex is a part of one's total being. His condemnation in various passages of the "flesh" is not anti-sexual. Sexual life is a part of the "body" and the body is the temple of the Holy Ghost (I Corinthians 6:19).
- (3) That sexual relations between husband and wife are a means of preserving purity and avoiding fornication (I Corinthians 7:24).
- (4) That man and wife should have agreement as to their sexual relationships and that there be harmony in this (I Corinthians 7:5).
- (5) That the sexual relationships of husband and wife are sacred, that, in fact, such intimacy is likened unto the intimacy that exists between the church and Christ (Ephesians 5:24-25). The union established in marriage is like the union between a believer and Christ. Hence Paul says that they are to marry "in the Lord" (I Corinthians 7:39).
- (6) That sex abused, has a devastating influence upon the whole life of man and upon his relations with others. Therefore, sexual sins generally stand at the top of sins listed (Galatians 5:19).

Paul offers the longest and most extensive treatment of marriage and sex of any apostles and most of this material is found in I Corinthians 7.

#### c. The Functions of Sex. X

One may, for purposes of clarity, differentiate between two functions for which the sexual urges have been created. Although these two purposes overlap and are often integrated in one experience, there are, realistically, two fulfillments in sexual experience. The first function is social and the second is pro-creative. The first is for the purpose of reaching the highest levels of communion as husband and wife, the other is for the purpose of begetting children. "The ultimate object of sexual desire in human beings is to bind husband and wife together within the legitimate marital bond, to make of them one flesh, to lead them together into love's

high places, and (2) when God wills to bless them with children from their union."<sup>15</sup> Then we need to add what Emile Cammaerts writes, "To marry for the sake of children only, is a mistake, to marry solely for the sake of sex is disaster."<sup>16</sup>

Many sincere people have no idea that sexual intercourse has any other object than the begetting of children. This premise is not correct, for the Bible recognizes a need for intercourse solely for the purpose of binding man and woman closer together, and thereby reaching fulfillment in marriage otherwise unattainable. The Roman church has gone so far as to give the Pope authority to dissolve a marriage where there has been no sexual intercourse. Paul's lengthy discussion of the intimacies of life in I Corinthians 7 makes no reference to the begetting of children. a

The implication of I Corinthians 7:2-3 points to satisfactory sex relations between husband and wife as a means to social purity. "Conjugal love, this wonderful bond between husband and wife, will always be a precious gift of the Creator to His children."<sup>17</sup>

Not only Scripture, but life's experiences show that not all sexual intercourse is for the begetting of children. Not nearly all sex experiences produce children. b

There are then two legitimate functions for conjugal relations: Social and pro-creative.

We need now to turn our attention more fully to the last of these two functions, the matter of begetting children. And in so doing we face the burning issue of birth control. By the term, "birth control", we shall understand to mean any willful control of birth, natural or artificial, using the term in its broader sense.

## 2. The Bible and Birth Control.

a. What does the Bible say about birth control? Nothing definite. The Bible has much to say about marriage and sex, duties of husbands and wives, about parental responsibilities, about sexual immorality, but little on this subject, nor does it say anything about the number of children parents ought to have in order to perform the will of God. We have examples of large as well as small families in the Bible.

There are, of course, some general overarching truths in the Bible which have direct or indirect bearing on this subject and which no Christian should ignore. For example; God is the giver and preserver of life. Man

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<sup>15</sup>Geldenhuys, The Intimate Life, Page 12.

<sup>16</sup>Wylie, Human Nature and Christian Marriage, Page 81.

<sup>17</sup>Rohwinkel, Planned Parenthood, Page 62.

has a share in God's creative activities, when by begetting children, parents bring into existence beings that are the object of God's redemptive concern. Children are a gift of God, and life is exceedingly precious in the sight of God. Rev. John R. Muraw in a study paper entitled, "The Moral and Spiritual Implications of Birth Control," has come to the following conclusions regarding biblical teachings on birth control:

"Whereas we are forced to construct a Christian view of planned parenthood from general Biblical principles rather than from direct Bible precepts we submit the following observations for your consideration. These statements are an attempt to summarize Bible references to the problems of birth control.

1. All through the patriarchal history there seems to have existed an unwritten moral law which instinctively absolved women from responsibility of giving birth to the greatest number of children possible. . . In the ceremonial law God gave to Israel slight provisions for the natural form of birth control by temporary abstinence. (see Leviticus 15.)

2. Biblical statements referring to number of offspring are consistently in favor of a large family. The whole tenor of Scripture commends pro-creative activity in the human family.

3. There is no law in the O. T. and there is no commandment in the New requiring parents to have as many children as they possibly can. God has arranged the laws of nature so as to make it possible to have many more births than is expedient. This factor in human nature makes married people responsible for the exercise of human judgment in matters pertaining to the propagation of the race.

4. The implications of I Corinthians 7:2-3 points to satisfactory sex relations between husband and wife as a means of social purity. When conjugal relations are kept on the level of marital love with mutual consideration and consent they perform a social function that promotes the blending of body, soul and spirit. . .

5. Any controlable physical phenomenon that reduces efficiency in the performance of duty has spiritual significance. Your body is the Lord's. How we use our bodies is a concern of God. The dissipation of human energy for ignoble purposes is, therefore, an offence to the divine will. This may well include excesses in sex experience.

6. The purpose of marriage includes the propagation of the human race. Interference with the natural laws that operate in favor of this function is invading the realm of divine sanctions. A failure to fulfill a divine function, without being incapable of doing so, has serious implications."

A further word should be added with regard to children as the Bible speaks of them. Basically the tenor of Scripture pertaining to them is that children are a blessing, not so much a command. So deep

was this conviction in the Old Testament that women who could not bear children considered themselves cursed by God. The Psalmist expresses the spirit of Scripture when he says, "Lo children are an heritage of the Lord, and the fruit of the womb is his reward" (Psalm 127:3). Never can we for one moment assume that we can create life. If from the loving union of husband and wife a child is born, this is considered an added blessing. God gave man the added blessing of being able to live on through his children, a blessing impossible for the unmarried. It is clear that God draws man into the responsibility of child-bearing, and has granted man freedom to operate in this area in the framework of divine purposes.

b. How birth is controlled. Let us distinguish between the natural and the artificial controls.

(1) Natural control of birth. We distinguish between two kinds of natural control:

- (a) Those controls which nature provides. The Creator, through nature, limits the birth of children by: ((1)) setting a time limit for women to conceive from puberty to menopause. ((2)) by giving the average woman a monthly period of sterility, the average being about 10-14 days. ((3)) God can also limit or prevent child birth through a natural sterility, through sickness, or even death. ((4)) God can also prevent birth by infertility in the man. ((5)) Through miscarriages. Enough to say that God can by natural law, and His special act quickly take from man the blessing of begetting children.
- (b) Controls in which man participates. Man may naturally control pregnancies by ((1)) total abstinence, ((2)) periodic abstinence, or by ((3)) coitus interruptus.

(2) Artificial control of birth. By artificial birth control is meant the employment of artificial devices, (contraceptives, as they are called) to prevent pregnancies. We must acknowledge the fact that the use of contraceptives is widespread. Like T V, for good or ill, they are here to stay. It is obvious that some form of birth control, whether natural or artificial, is being used in our day. An average woman could bear 15 - 25 children in her life time. Look around and see the present day families! An estimate says that 80 - 90% of Americans use some method of birth control. 18

c. The Moral issue. With the coming of the artificial or mechanical method, there has come a moral issue to which the Christian concept of life should speak.

Various church denominations have spoken to this problem. The Roman Catholic Church has always and does today condemn contraceptives,

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18. Irene Sashnen, "Birth Control and the Christian," Christian Herald, April, 1959, Page 67.

although Catholics are allowed birth control through the natural method of periodic abstinence.

The following denominations have given an official endorsement of birth control, both natural and artificial: Methodist, Evangelical and Reformed, Augustana Lutheran, United Lutheran, Quaker, and Episcopal. (For official statements of church bodies see Rekwinkel, Planned Parenthood, Page 4.)

In two states the dissimulation of birth control information is against the law. In Massachusetts and Connecticut, States which are predominantly Roman Catholic.

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We are raising the moral issue of birth control at the point where artificial means are used to prevent pregnancies. We are assuming that the Bible has no injunctions against planned parenthood, that is the spacing of children, planning prayerfully for children. We are, however, raising the specific question: Is it morally right to use artificial means to prevent the conception of life? Are we not thereby interfering with nature, and are we taking life too much into our own hands? Would not the tenor of Scripture, as a whole, caution us in this matter?

Current thinking on this matter, also now in Evangelical circles, presses the point that artificial birth control is actually no different than natural control. Control, or prevention, is control and prevention, no matter what the means are. It all depends finally, so goes the argument, upon the motives. Periodic abstinence, or the rhythm method is sinful if thereby parenthood is directly avoided.

Dwight Hervey Small, a representative of evangelical thinking, in his study in this field has made the following conclusions:

"There is not a single Biblical reference to guide us in this matter. . . It is left a matter of individual conscience, but not without certain principles to point the way. Whatever the method of birth limitation, the question of motive is foremost. Is the motive birth prevention or birth planning? Prevention indicates irresponsibility, planning indicates responsibility. . . So it may be concluded that any or all means may be right if subject to the prayerful understanding of both persons as God's will for them; but any means will be wrong if not subject to such prayerful seeking of God's will. . ."19

So then we are in the conflict, is the use of contraceptives right or wrong? Whereas their use was once advocated primarily by liberal churches, now evangelical leaders also begin to hold this position. We are now at the point where we must try to find a Scriptural way.

Whatever we want to say about it, we cannot afford to overlook the weightier matters which are: a--to build a happy marriage, and b--to carry out parental responsibilities.

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<sup>19</sup>Small, Design for Christian Marriage, Page 109.

Before leaving the issue of contraceptives we should take note of the following dangers involved in this method.

- (1) To limit the size of the family through this method to the popular figure of 1 or 2 children is a repudiation of the Christian philosophy of pro-creation.

"Most families are now too small to function as families, to perform their specific task for each of their members. "Quality not quantity" is a dangerous slogan when applied to human breeding. It has lent support to prodigious rationalization of parents' motives. It is obvious that the one- or two-child family can often secure for its offspring certain advantages which cannot well be shared among four or five. Education is an example. The parents may just afford to send an only child to a first-rate school; if he had brothers and sisters, none of the children could go to it. Undue concern about clothes and inordinate care for appearances may set a false standard of living which adds to the family budget what would pay for another baby, or more than one. . . . No substitute exists for that which four or five children mean to each other and to the family group. The "best chance" a child can have is that which brothers and sisters, and no one else, can provide."<sup>20</sup>

- (2) The use of contraceptives is a threat to the sanctity of marriage with its contingent obligation of parenthood.
- (3) ~~The use of contraceptives is injurious to the women's body and often leads to difficulty in securing pregnancy when contraceptives have been used for some time.~~<sup>21</sup>
- (4) Contraceptives can lead to nervous and spiritual frustration—particularly in the life of the woman.
- (5) Use of contraceptives tends to open the door to illegitimate sex relationship and immorality.

### 3. Christian Principles for planned parenthood.

The following is an attempt to summarize Christian principles which may be helpful to Christian couples in their marital relationships.

a. God draws men into partnership in the matter of creating life. Inasmuch as it is in the power of men to willfully prevent the begetting of children, it is clear that God invites mankind to join in this entire purpose of fulfilling his creative will. Much about begetting children has been left to the discretion of men.

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<sup>20</sup>Dr. Russell quoted in Hylie, Human Nature and Christian Marriage, Page 88.  
<sup>21</sup>Maier, For Better, Not for Worse, Page 396.

b. There is at work in God's creation a perpetual control of the number of children born. Not every sexual act results in pregnancy. And literally millions of male sperm are lost in each ejaculation. Only one sperm is needed to fertilize the egg. These are limitations which the creator himself has fixed.

c. Children are a blessing of God, and they should come as a result of the loving conjugal relationship of husband and wife. It is not commanded how many children we shall have. Hundred's of factors can shape that story. Although one does not marry just to beget children, and although one does not marry only to receive sexual satisfaction, the conception of a child should constantly be viewed as an added blessing to an already loving and satisfying relationship.

d. Birth control practiced for selfish reasons ~~and with false motives~~ <sup>avoided</sup> is always contrary to God's will. <sup>see addendum</sup> Some false motives are:

~~(1) Love of wealth, luxury, and ease.~~

~~(2) Shirking the uncomfortable inconvenience of pregnancy, painful child birth and child care.~~

~~(3) Fear of over-populating the world.~~

~~(4) Belief that small families are beneficial to parents, children, or the community.~~

*Birth control practiced for selfish reasons and with false motives, such as love of wealth & luxury, & ease, and to avoid the discomforts of pregnancy, are always contrary to the will.*

e. It would appear that the most natural and noble method of control would be by means of periodic abstinence. This was the method prescribed by God for Israel in Leviticus 15. By this method the man abstained from sexual intercourse during the period of menstruation plus seven days for cleansing. This involved a period of 14 days. The periodic abstinence method has the following advantages:

~~(1) It is a method which God gave His people in the O. T.~~

(2) It gives the woman a period of "rest".

(3) It encourages self-discipline for the husband.

(4) It gives husband and wife a possibility to space their children and have a planned family within God's pattern. ~~When children are conceived in the conjugal period, it can be accepted as God-willed and the child will be welcomed "under God". Some unwanted or "accidental" children have later become the most loved ones God sent.~~

(5) It removes fear, frustration, and guilt feelings from the sexual life experiences.

f. Whatever husband and wife do, it must be with agreement; there must be mutual understanding. "Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time" (I Corinthians 7:5).

g. The first obligation of the married is to make their marriage successful. For this a spiritual fulfillment of a happy sex relationship is paramount. This is the first and ultimate goal--the marriage must succeed. "Love between a man and woman under God--not a desire for children is the basis of marriage."<sup>22</sup>

h. In circumstances of health or other crucial situations, husband and wife should seek medical advice relative to the begetting children.

i. Finally, it must be recognized that there is no one prescription which will meet the needs of every couple. Each home must find its own solution and its own way toward a God pleasing parenthood. If under God we seek to carry out His purpose and will, we shall find a satisfying way.

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<sup>22</sup>Irene Soehnen, "Birth Control and the Christian", Christian Herald, April, 1959, Page 66.

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## CHRISTIAN IDEALS IN MARRIAGE AND SEX

Committee Members: David Ewert and G. S. Warkentin, Waldo Hiebert.

1. Page 2 Insert after third paragraph: "However, the significance of the marriage ceremony is not to be minimized, for it gives legal and social sanction to the marriage union. Any sexual relationships before wedlock must be considered as sinful. Christians should feel obligated to have a church wedding, with its emphasis on the sanctity of the divine institution of marriage.
2. Page 3 in the last paragraph: (a) In the first line insert "alone" after "love." (b) Delete the second sentence. (c) Delete the last sentence.
3. Page 4, the first sentence of the first paragraph should read: "The marriage ceremony, which is required by the state and approved by society, provides the proper sanction for that "mystic" union which occurs when man and wife come together in conjugal relationship."
4. Page 5 under "c" under (1) "sex love", insert after "personality" the last 3 sentences under (2) "No doubt many couples . . . a semi-god.  
  
Under (2) "Personal love", read: "This love goes further than sex love. It is a love in which a 'give and take' attitude exists between the marriage partners and which seeks for mutual satisfaction. (The sentence beginning with "It is love. . . egotism" should be deleted.)
5. Matthew 5:28 "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."
6. Page 12 delete subpoint (3).
7. Page 13 subpoint "d" Delete the 4 subpoints under "d" and let "d" read: "Birth control practiced for selfish reasons and with false motives, such as love of wealth, luxury, and ease, and to avoid the discomforts of pregnancy, painful child birth and child care, are always contrary to God's will.  
  
Subpoint "e" should read: "It would appear that the most natural and noble method of control would be my means of periodic abstinence. (all the rest of the paragraph is to be omitted.) From this it follows, that subpoint (1) be deleted, as well as the sentence in subpoint (4) "When children are . . . God sent."
8. Page 10. Add: Controls in which man participates, "but not necessarily approved."