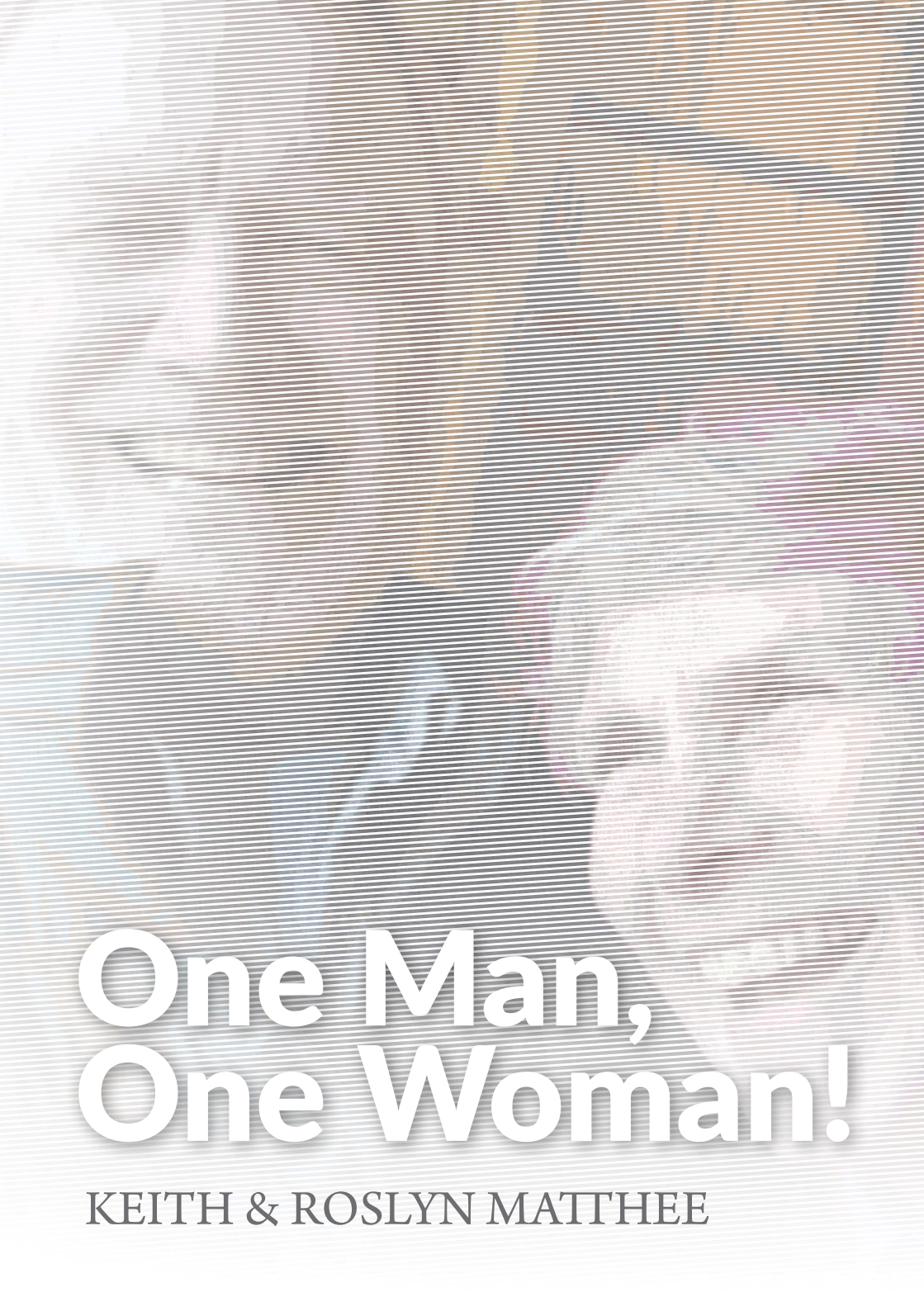




One Man, One Woman!

KEITH & ROSLYN MATTHEE

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

After completing his schooling at Grey College, Keith did a year's compulsory military service in the South African Navy. Thereafter he obtained his BA LLB at the University of Natal. He was admitted as an advocate in 1979. He obtained a BD from Rhodes University in 1987.

After completing her schooling at Kaffrarian High School in King William's Town, Roslyn obtained a BA at the Universities of Stellenbosch and then Rhodes. Thereafter she obtained an HDE, Honours and Masters degrees at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg. After completing her dissertation and year's internship at Pretoria University, she registered as a Counselling Psychologist with the SA Medical and Dental Council in 1985.

They met in Pietermaritzburg in Roslyn's final year of study.

Keith left law in 1979 for eight years when he and Roslyn went to work amongst students and then for the Methodist Church. During this period they worked on various university campuses in South Africa. During 1981 – 1982 they were based at St Aldates, Oxford.

Keith returned to the bar as an advocate in 1987. Since 1991 he has served in an adjudicating role in different forums, including serving as an arbitrator, a presiding officer in the Industrial Court, an assessor in the Labour Appeal Court and on a number of occasions as an Acting Judge in the High Courts of Port Elizabeth, Grahamstown, East London, Mthatha, Cape Town and South Gauteng.

He has appeared in all the courts of South Africa, including the Constitutional Court and the Supreme Court of Appeal. In 2002 he was appointed as Senior Counsel by President Mbeki. In 2007 he and Roslyn relocated from the Eastern Cape to the Western Cape.

Throughout this period outside of the home and her calling as a wife and mother, Roslyn practised as a Counselling Psychologist and lectured the Psychology Honours and Theology Students in Human

Development. She also served for a number of years on the selection committee for Masters students at Rhodes University. A highlight for her was when she was asked to take responsibility for the pastoral care work for a number of years at Commemoration Methodist Church.

When they moved to Cape Town in 2007 Roslyn trained as an artist and on two occasions her oil paintings were selected by SASA for exhibition at Kirstenbosch.

Keith is the author of *Decolonising Jesus*, *The Emperor Has No Clothing, Whose Way* and *The Resurrection – a lawyer's view*. He recently has completed a Doctor of Laws thesis at Free State University, *Subjective strands in the jurisprudence of the Constitutional Court and related implications for Civil Society*. The results of this research are available on his website.

They were married in 1980 and have two sons, a daughter, five granddaughters and one grandson. They stay fit by mountain hikes and horse riding, mostly at Keith's insistence!

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DEDICATION

To Talitha, Naomi Joy, Katie Dinah, Bea, Peter, Elizabeth Stewart and any other grandchildren to come! Our prayer for you is to build your houses on rock, namely on Jesus Christ and His Scriptures.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To our Saviour and Lord, Jesus Christ, for bringing us together.

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CHAPTER 1

Good News needs bad news!

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent and believe in the gospel'.

Mark 1 verses 14 – 15

The modern philosopher had told me again and again that I was in the right place, and I had still felt depressed even in acquiescence. But I had heard that I was in the wrong place, and my soul sang for joy I knew now why the grass had always seemed to me as queer as the green beard of a giant, and why I could feel homesick at home.

GK Chesterton in his book, *Orthodoxy*

In the nineties Keith was asked to help 13 convicted murderers to apply for amnesty. They had been convicted after a long, much publicised trial. The evidence clearly showed that they were guilty of murder. The man killed was a victim of mob justice. Their defence was simple. They did not commit the murder.

At the heart of the amnesty legislation was that the crime must have been committed for political reasons, whether that be as part of fighting against apartheid or fighting for apartheid.

As Keith listened to the men, their stories were once again simple. They did not commit the murder.

At that point he explained to them that if that was the case, they could not get amnesty. The reason was self-evident – they could not get amnesty for something they had not done.

There were a few moments of silence in the prison room as the import of this sunk in. And then followed 13 confessions!

One of the great lies today, sadly also within parts of the church, is that love means affirming people, no matter what life choice they make. And to offend someone is unpardonable. And so to call sin, sin, is not only unloving and judgmental, it is hateful.

The effect of this is that we deprive people of the Good News of amnesty. For if there is no “bad” news, sin, to be repented of, there can be no forgiveness of that sin. So under the guise of being “loving” and caring, in effect we take away the Good News of Jesus Christ, of grace, forgiveness, of new beginnings, of like Peter 2000 years ago, not only being forgiven and restored by Jesus for his threefold betrayal of Jesus, but then being greatly used by Jesus as the rock upon which His church would be built. (A practical example of the possibility of such redemptive restoration can be seen in the chapter on divorce.)

And satan replaces this Good News by denying that there is “bad” news, and in the name of “love” providing so called “safe” spaces, trauma counselling, medication, and a litany of rationalisations, central to which is a mentality of victimhood, self-pity and often “Christophobia” (a term we heard recently in an excellent talk about Christ and marriage).

And central to satan’s strategy is his deception that we must follow our hearts, our “truth”. Of course the fatal flaw of this use of the heart was identified by the prophet Jeremiah some 2600 years ago: **“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick.”**¹ (This following of the heart has now reached a stage of insanity where amongst other things men and women can choose any sex their heart desires – in this book we will not dignify this madness with a response.²)

We recently heard a song with the line; “This world is not our home!”

As this reality grows in us, Jesus Christ’s repeated warnings for us to be ready to meet Him at all times fills us with a sense of joyful expectation, and at the same time with a sense of urgency and foreboding, particularly about a world which, often consciously, is allowing itself to be robbed of the grace and love of Jesus Christ by the great deceiver, satan.

¹ Jeremiah 17 verse 9.

² This is not to say that there are not, relatively speaking, a very small number of individuals who genuinely do struggle with gender dysphoria. There are excellent and well researched resources on this which we can refer any reader to, if interested.

Obviously our greatest concern is for those closest to us, not least of all our grandchildren. This book is our love letter to them, lest we go “home” before they are old enough for us to share the truth of Jesus Christ and His Scriptures with them. The “bad” news, and the “Good News”.

Given the full frontal attack by satan on the core institution put in place by God³ for a healthy society, marriage⁴, we have chosen to write about Biblical marriage as a means for us to share the truth and Good News of Jesus Christ.

Although a love letter to our grandchildren, it is our hope that the Holy Spirit will use it in the lives of our wider family and anybody else who reads it, to convict them of the truth of Jesus Christ. Who, whilst offering Himself and His life to us as a free gift of grace, at the same time demands all we have. And that the reward of dying to self, and living only for Christ, is true freedom, joy and life in all its fullness.

At the same time, it would be remiss of us not to make it quite clear to our grandchildren, and any other readers of the book, that Jesus repeatedly warned us that everyone who hears His words but does not obey them, is like the foolish man who built his house on sand. Outwardly such a house can look beautiful and secure. But when the rains and storms come, the final storm being when Jesus comes back to judge, such a house will fall.

³ Central to satan's attack is to use the word God in a vague sense so that it can cover any belief framework. When God is used in this book we mean God the Father, God the Son (Jesus Christ), God the Holy Spirit.

⁴ Mark 10 verses 6-9, where Jesus affirms the truth of Genesis 2 verses 24-25.

CHAPTER 2

Gravity will break us!

*But from **the beginning of the creation, God made them male and female. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh, so then they are no longer two, but one flesh.***

*Wherefore **what God has joined together, let not man separate.***

Jesus in Mark 10 verses 6-9

Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

Genesis 2 verses 24-25

In George Orwell's 1984, at one point the "hero" of the story commits the unpardonable sin and says: "But after reading it he knew better than before that he was not mad. Being in a minority, even a minority of one, did not make you mad. There was truth and there was untruth, and if you clung to the truth even against the whole world, you were not mad."

In this book, given the spirit of the age we find ourselves in, we aim to commit the unpardonable sin when it comes to men, women and marriage – there is truth about men, women and marriage. And it is not complicated!

We have now been growing into one flesh for 43 years. It is thus all but impossible to separate and distinguish our respective input into this book. However, despite this process of the past 43 years of growing into one flesh, we have remained distinctly man and woman, husband and wife.

Accordingly, there will be a chapter on being a woman written by Roslyn, and on being a man written by Keith. The rest of the book will be a joint venture. For it we will draw heavily on our own personal walk as a married couple, including the counselling and teaching work we have done with other married and single people. Given the at times personal nature of the work done, we will use fictional names.

Because of our academic background, upfront we have a need to declare our bias. (Sadly, from recent personal experience in modern academia, one is today dissuaded from declaring such a bias.)

Our bias is that our task is not to redefine or develop new theories on men, women and marriage. We believe our responsibility is to uncover what is already there in the creation ordinances in Genesis 1, 2 and 3, when it comes to men, women and marriage. And that just as it is not possible to break the law of gravity, only illustrate it when one hits the floor, so it also is not possible to break creation ordinances when it comes to men, women and marriage. Quite simply those creation ordinances will break us, and our society, when we do not comply with them.

CHAPTER 3

Purpose of marriage

Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it.

Ephesians 5 verses 24-25

When husband and wife live together according to God's will, their marriage becomes like a mirror, a reflection, of Christ's love. Martin Luther says: 'Marriage compels us to believe.'

Walter Trobisch

Marriage is more than your love for each other. It has a higher dignity and power, for it is God's holy ordinance, through which He wills to perpetuate the human race till the end of time. In your love you see only your two selves in the world, but in marriage you are a link in the chain of the generations, which God causes to come and to pass away to His glory, and calls into His kingdom. In your love, you see only the heaven of your own happiness, but in marriage you are placed at a post of responsibility towards the world and mankind. Your love is your own private possession, but marriage is more than something personal – it is a status, an office.

Bonhoeffer

First principle thinking is crucial in all major life decisions. When it comes to marriage a clear first principle question is: What is the purpose of marriage? The answer to this question determines what type of marriage one will have, especially when the inevitable crisis in one's marriage happens.

In broad terms we find three responses to this question.

In our present narcissistic world the answer is clear – my happiness. In such a marriage self-sacrifice only features to the extent that one's own happiness requires it.

In certain parts of the world, its purpose primarily is a social cohesion purpose for the wider community. In such a marriage self-sacrifice features for the sake of the wider community of which one is part.

And then there is the Biblical purpose of marriage, sadly lost on many Christian couples.

In a nutshell, such Biblical purpose is that our marriages must reflect the very nature of Jesus Christ and His design for the world we find ourselves in. In other words, our marriages must be a witness to the wider community of the sacrificial love and holiness of Jesus Christ. **Put bluntly, marriage is not about us!**

At the core of the nature of Christ is sacrifice, dying to self. Not one of His decisions even remotely ever was driven by His rights, His comfort, His dreams. Every decision solely and simply was all about loving and obeying His Father, irrespective of the cost to Himself.

His words in Gethsemane, 2000 years after He uttered them, remain the clarion call to all who choose to follow Him, not least of all at times in their marriages: “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.” Or as only a few hours earlier after showing His disciples what greatness is, by washing their feet, He commands His disciples: “If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet.”

As Paul so beautifully writes in his letter to the Christians in Philippi:

“Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

Using this lens, Paul’s words to the husbands and wives in Ephesus assume a totally different meaning to the caricature the world has imposed on these words. We will deal with this in later chapters.

For now it is clear from these words that husbands have the grave responsibility of showing the world something of the love of Christ in how they love their wives.

Of course as wives submit to their husbands so they also show the world something of how Christ submitted to his Father.

Central to both the husband's and wife's responsibility is that they must both die to self. Only as they do this are they able through their marriage to show forth the love of Christ. And the goal of this, as Martin Luther wrote, is that through our marriages other people might come to believe in Jesus Christ and his Gospel.

Sadly, in our 43 years of involvement in counselling, advising about marriage and at the marriage ceremonies and celebrations we have attended, very seldom has the focus been on this purpose of marriage. How often do we not hear at weddings that it is the bride's day, and often also the bride's mother's day. The effort and expense to achieve this purpose more often than not is energy sapping and a great gift to our bank managers!

We will in later chapters (particularly in the one on divorce), touch on some of the practical consequences of this self-centred approach, when reality hits the couple. (Fundamental here is always to remain practical when it comes to what it means to die to self in one's marriage.)

Of course marriage also is the building block for Christ's design for the world, which includes having children. As Bonhoeffer writes: "...it is God's holy ordinance, through which He wills to perpetuate the human race till the end of time... Your love is your own private possession, but marriage is more than something personal – it is a status, an office."

And so God commands the first couple, Adam and Eve: "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on earth." Words pregnant with meaning, not least of all in the 21st century where at every level there is a full frontal attack on this creation ordinance of God, even including sanitising and glorifying unions which by biological definition exclude the possibility of such union producing children.

In later chapters we will deal with parts of this attack. Suffice for now to emphasize that marriage created by God is the fundamental building block for any healthy society. And crucial here is to remain clear about the fundamental purpose of marriage.

In our 43 years of marriage, we in faith and in obedience have often had to make tough decisions without clarity about the details of the practical consequences of such decisions. Not least of all about matters financial. The assurance that no matter what, our marriage had/has a God ordained purpose beyond merely our own happiness and material comfort, freed (and continues to free) us to be obedient to Christ by serving Him, and others, through our marriage. As one of Roslyn's heroes, Corrie Ten Boom, puts it: "Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God".

Before we turn to our own marriage walk to illustrate fundamental Biblical truths, let us look at the simple structure God created for marriage.

CHAPTER 4

Unambiguous structure of marriage

*Have you not read that he who created them from **the beginning made them male and female, and said, ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate’***

Jesus in Matthew 19

Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

Genesis 2 verses 24-25

*So when the woman saw that the tree was **good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise . . .***

Genesis 3 verse 6

Few things are clearer in Scripture than the God ordained structure of marriage. Key to recognising satan’s attack on marriage are his words to Eve in Genesis 3: “Did God actually say, You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?”

Not only does satan introduce doubt about what God says in Genesis 2, he misrepresents what God clearly says there: “And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, ‘You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.’”

A command intended to protect Adam and Eve, so that they could enjoy the bounty of God’s provision without the fear of death, both physical and spiritual, is distorted into a simple death inducing prohibition.

Very much like satan’s attack on God’s gift of sex. Through his different agencies, including within the church, he paints a false picture of God’s attitude to sex,

namely that it is dirty, not something to be enjoyed and only serves a functional purpose, procreation. He then offers a counterfeit of promiscuity, adultery and pornography as part of his distortion.

Of course satan is aided and abetted both by Adam and Eve.

Adam is nowhere to be seen when Eve has to deal with satan. (Keith will deal with this at greater length in his chapter on being a man.)

Although Eve corrects satan's distortion of what God in fact said, she sees fit to add an additional prohibition of her own in verse 3: "... neither shall you touch it,..."

This is the beginning of the slippery slope. No matter how seemingly small, or indeed "loving" or "noble" the addition or subtraction from God's Word, it is a failure to submit wholly to God and His Word. And before we know it, theologians and leaders in the church, in the name of God, are supporting, promoting or condoning practices and teachings in direct conflict with God's Word.

And this process more often than not starts with theologians and leaders within the church saying: "Scripture either is not clear (for example about the structure for marriage ordained by God), or needs to be modernised, so out of love and compassion, and a need to make it relevant, let us have a conversation about what Scripture says about it."

And of course the world embraces these leaders and theologians as people full of love, compassion and enlightenment, because what they are condoning or promoting appears "good", "a delight to the eyes" and "wise". The very things which in Genesis 3 convinced Eve, and then Adam, to disobey God so that they might become like God. And those who seek to be true to Scripture are labelled bigots, fundamentalists, intolerant and many other epithets.

Let us now turn to the words of Jesus in Matthew 19. Quoting from Genesis 1 and 2 He says:

"Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.'"

Simple, clear and uncomplicated. Just as God's commandment to Adam is in Genesis 2, concerning which tree not to eat from.

If we can paraphrase. Marriage is a lifelong commitment between one man and one woman. From God's perspective, at the end of the day the only one which counts, the effect of marriage is to make the man and woman one flesh, in all ways, not only physically. This is not to say that they do not each remain unique individuals and at all times must seek to fulfil their respective roles as wife and husband.

Central to achieving this structure put in place by God, is for the husband and the wife to leave (spiritually and emotionally, which more often than not requires a physical leaving as well), their respective parental homes. Then as a new entity, "one flesh", to return to their families. (We will develop on this paraphrase in later chapters.)

As marriage is God ordained, whether or not the man and the woman acknowledge Him, they will be accountable to God in and for their marriage. And in how they deal with conflicts in their marriage. Divorce simply is not part of God's plan for marriage, just as death was never part of God's plan for humanity. (We deal with divorce in a later chapter.)

CHAPTER 5

“Marriage is a journey.”

The marriage ceremony is not the destination, it is only the beginning of the journey.

Walter Trobisch

When we met in August 1979, it is difficult to imagine two people with more different backgrounds and personalities.

Roslyn had grown up in a stable home in King William's Town. Her father, Stewart Dorrington, was a well-respected and liked businessman and sportsman. Her mother, Beatrice Dorrington, performed a juggling act of raising Roslyn and her 3 younger siblings in King William's Town, whilst at the same time, with the help of a manager and a loyal staff, running the family farm near Zeerust. Every holiday the whole family would go to the farm, which in effect was Roslyn's second home. Throughout her schooling and university years Roslyn found herself in leadership positions. She was, and remains, by nature, conventional and reticent to step out of line.

An important exception to this was the example of her mother, who was the first Afrikaner cattle female judge in the country. Roslyn has vivid memories of going along with her mom to visit the various farmers who shared a passion for Afrikaner cattle. These farmers were all men, all of whom obviously respected her mom as a fellow cattle farmer. Roslyn says this experience has been central to her never feeling uncomfortable in the company of men, without compromising on her being a woman.

Keith grew up in a family setup where there was often strife between his parents, ending up with their divorce when he was 21 years old. His father was a detective all his life, after having spent some 4 years fighting in Egypt, Italy and Austria during the Second World War. He always had leadership positions in the police force and was fearless. He did not hold back in the use of corporal punishment with Keith and his older brother. His mom was a humble and gentle person, completely dominated by his father. Her love for Keith and his brother was sacrificial and unconditional.

Unlike Roslyn, Keith and his family moved a number of times during his childhood. Starting off in Mayfair and then Homestead Park in Johannesburg, Keith's family moved to Kroonstad, Bloemfontein and then to various suburbs in Durban, where his parents were finally divorced. This moving was as a result of his father's various promotions.

By nature, Keith struggles to submit to authority and invariably finds himself wanting to go against the spirit of the age.

When Roslyn's dad described Keith to her mom, after having just met him, she famously replied, "Oh hell!" We suspect what really got to her was not so much the long hair and beard he had described, but that Keith had decided "to leave law, give all his money to the poor, and became a missionary!"

It is now 43 years later and Beatrice now stays permanently with us, and notwithstanding the "oh hell", is quite fond of Keith.

Within three weeks of meeting, we spoke of marriage. (It was in Queen Elizabeth Park in Pietermaritzburg.) However, given his experience of his parents' marriage and divorce, it took Keith longer than Roslyn to decide on marriage. It was about this time that we came across Walter Trobisch's book, *I married you*. It was to have a profound and lasting impact on both our understanding of biblical marriage. The impact remains 43 years later, which impact will be apparent to any discerning person who reads this book.

Given Keith's fears about marriage, he wanted everything "tied up" before he committed to marriage. At times this involved incredibly tough and emotional exchanges between us, not least of all concerning previous relationships we both had had. Here it particularly was Keith who struggled. Another issue was Roslyn's political, cultural and economic conservatism, in stark contrast to Keith's outlook.

And during this struggle, in *I married you*, Keith came across the words: "The marriage ceremony is not the destination, it is only the beginning of the journey." It was like a light bulb went on for him. It was fine not to have everything tied up before marrying Roslyn. Of course Keith being sceptical Keith, the next day for the only time ever in his 50 year walk with Jesus Christ, unbeknownst to Roslyn, asked Jesus very specifically and concretely to confirm for him that day whether he should ask Roslyn to marry him. That was about 8 am in the morning.

About an hour later he received a phone call from his second “mom”, Mrs de Bruyn. Based in Durban she somehow had got hold of the telephone number of the people in Pretoria where Keith was boarding at the time. Mrs de Bruyn did not know about Roslyn’s existence as Keith had temporarily lost contact with her when he moved from Durban to Pietermaritzburg, the previous year. She exchanged pleasantries with Keith and then told him she had phoned to find out when he was going to get married!

Half an hour later the morning post arrived. There were two items of post for Keith. One was a Christian magazine *His Magazine*, which his new employer, the Student Christian Association, had subscribed him to. The feature of that edition was “Christian Marriage”. The other item of post was a letter from a friend who was a student in London. Alan knew Roslyn, and in the midst of his struggle about marriage Keith had written to Alan. In the letter, Alan first quoted Bonhoeffer on marriage, and then expressed his opinion that marrying Roslyn was a good idea.

Keith immediately went to Roslyn, who was doing her internship as a psychologist at the University of Pretoria, and proposed to her. Her response was, “Why did you take so long to ask!”

CHAPTER 6

Two imperative building blocks

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.

2 Timothy 3 verses 16-17

Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.

Romans 12 verse 12

Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain.

Psalms 127 verse 1

Our marriage did not have a great start!

The setting we chose for our wedding was a beautiful spot in the Drakensberg Mountains, in the Champagne Castle area – the chapel at the old El Mirador hotel. In retrospect Keith feels he allowed his ideology to have undue influence on the arrangements! The upshot of this was that Roslyn's parents had virtually no say and no expenses and it was a "dry" morning wedding. Central to this decision was Ron Sider's interpretation of Scripture that "We need to live more simply in order that others may simply live."

Of course this deprived Stewart and Beatrice from really celebrating the marriage of their eldest daughter, the first one to be married in the family. To add insult to injury, Roslyn also gave a speech at the reception, in place of her father. Once again a decision Keith says was undergirded by his ideology, at that stage unduly influenced by secular feminism! Even as we write this Roslyn disputes this and says it was her decision.

Notwithstanding Roslyn's protestations that there is no need for it, ever since Keith has been trying to make up for his inability simply to have celebrated the wonderful occasion. (And so earlier this year we had a wonderful 4 days in the

Champagne Castle area to celebrate our 43rd anniversary – Roslyn did not protest too much!)

Another bad call by Keith was to end off the 6 day honeymoon with running the Comrades marathon, some 90 km from Pietermaritzburg to Durban. Anyone who has run it will know that in effect the race starts at least a week before the starter's gun goes off. So when Ros had finished saying goodbye to family and friends after the reception, Keith was nowhere to be seen. He was busy making final arrangements with friends who were going to second him in the Comrades. The delay hugely embarrassed Ros. As they drove off, the last thing Roslyn's dad saw were tears of frustration in the eyes of his newly married daughter. To compound things, a kilometre later Keith stopped to remove the cans which had been tied to their car, whereas Roslyn wanted people to see that they were newly wed. The first hour or so of the trip to Sani Pass passed in icy silence.

And things just got worse. Because of the Comrades being 6 days away, Keith did not want to do anything to injure himself. He also felt cut off from the hype running up to the Comrades, and so convinced Roslyn to cut the honeymoon short!

Keith completed the Comrades the Saturday after the wedding day. We returned to Pretoria on Sunday and on Monday morning Keith woke up with an intensely itchy rash all over his body, from head to toe. One of the practical effects of this was that he could not even put a sheet over himself, lest he aggravate the itch. Naturally this was not great for our love life!

Despite consulting numerous specialists at the Pretoria government hospital, the rash remained for about a year, fortunately some days being better than others. At one point the one specialist called in all his colleagues to come and have a look. "This is when we realise how little we really know", was his observation to his colleagues. (For what it is worth, we eventually became convinced that the rash was caused by a combination of factors – stress, before the wedding Keith's parents had not seen one another since the divorce in 1976 and he was very anxious about what would happen at the wedding, Keith's fears about marriage and of course the training for and running of the Comrades all must have contributed to an immune system which could no longer cope, and the body had

to express it in some way. Over the years there were periods when the rash came back but happily Keith seems to have outgrown it.)

As we reflect back on our wedding and our first year or so of marriage, we believe it was all about the laying of a solid foundation for our marriage. It also helped alert us to cardinal Biblical truths about ourselves and marriage. This book deals with these issues. At this stage we highlight the two building blocks which were brought into sharp focus for us during that first year of marriage.

Firstly, it drove us to pray together. Often there were times when there was nothing else we could do. We had exhausted our own resources and “ingenuity”. This was the beginning of praying together becoming an ingrained habit in our marriage. Humans being human, had the first year been a great year, the chances are that joint prayer would not have become an ingrained habit, certainly not grappling prayer, as opposed to merely ticking the box prayer.

One of the major spin-offs of this ingrained habit, was that when there was conflict between us, inevitable in the first year of any marriage, our common reference point was the One to whom we prayed, Jesus Christ. We found that not only is it impossible to go to Him and retain our anger or resentment against one another, it was also so much easier to say we were sorry and ask for forgiveness of one another by telling Jesus we were sorry and asking for His forgiveness.

This dimension of shared prayer to Jesus Christ has undergirded our marriage these past 43 years, particularly when the going has been tough.

Secondly, it drove us from the outset together to search for answers, comfort and assurance in Scripture. Flowing from this, in our 43 years of marriage no decision has been taken which has not been rooted in what the Holy Spirit has revealed to us through Scripture. Central to this has been always to be part of a weekly Bible study/Fellowship group, as a couple, whether that was in Pretoria, Oxford, Durban, Grahamstown, King William’s Town, Cape Town or Greyton.

Crucial to this has been that we have been able to test our rationalisations, our instincts, our feelings, our hearts, our justifications, our pride, by a reference point outside of ourselves. In all major decisions, “my” or “our” opinion simply has never been our test. At the end of the day in our marriage, the authority is Jesus Christ, as revealed in Scripture.

Given our very different personalities and backgrounds, we simply never could have stayed together for these 43 years without praying together and without submitting to an authority, a reference point, outside of ourselves, Jesus Christ and His Word.

CHAPTER 7

Leaving and cleaving - Oxford

... a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast/cleave to his wife, ...

Genesis 2 verse 24

When still a young boy Keith's late mom used to pose the following question to him. When one day he is married and he sees his wife and her in trouble in the sea, who would he help first? Of course Keith immediately always would say that he would first go to his mom. Every time his mom would correct him and say no, he must first save his wife.

This graphic illustration has never left Keith and he has used it with our own children, and in our counselling.

At the heart of this illustration is the leaving Jesus speaks of when quoting Genesis 2.

Quite often in our counselling we have been confronted, usually by the husband, with words along the following line, "I am finding it difficult to balance out my duties between my wife and my mother."

Our response is always immediate. There must be no competition. No balancing out. No negotiation. He immediately must make it very clear to his mother as to who comes first in his life, irrespective of the conflict it causes with his mother. At the same time there must not be a moment's doubt in his wife's mind that she comes first. Practically speaking at times this might need a physical removal from the mother's territory, or a removal of the mother from the wife's territory. Of course such a situation also at times applies to wives who need to make it equally clear to her family that her husband always comes first.

A requirement for this leaving is a fundamental mind shift in both the husband and wife. We have often seen that either the husband or wife in practice just want their spouse to be absorbed by their "old" family, without her/him having to leave their family. Symbolically that is why it is so important for a husband and wife to share a name, whatever name that is. It makes a statement that with marriage a

new entity has come into being. An entity separate from the previous two respective families.

Which brings us to our First Christmas! Unlike in Keith's broken family, there was a strong tradition in Roslyn's family for the extended family to gather together for Christmas on the family farm. These celebrations had nothing to do with celebrating the birth of Christ, and everything to do with celebrating family. As is the case in the Western world today, the creature was enjoying and celebrating the fruit of God's creation, in this case family, without acknowledging the Creator.

We joined the celebrations, but left on the day before Christmas so that we could celebrate our first Christmas as a new couple who had "left" our respective families. Roslyn wept as we drove off the farm.

Although it was a dramatic and very practical demonstration of the "leaving" we find in Genesis 2, thinking back now not only was it not necessary, perhaps it would have been better for us to have remained for Christmas. After all we were the only Christ followers on the farm at that time.

On reflection by far the best practical gift to us to help us both "leave" our families (obviously far easier for Keith because of his broken family), and "cleave" to one another as a new couple, was when a year or so into our marriage we were sent to work in a church in Oxford. In 1981 the only means of communication were letters! And a phone call at the beginning of 1982 to tell our parents that we were pregnant with our first child.

When we returned not only were we now a new independent couple in the eyes of our families and friends, but far more importantly both of us at a deep level saw ourselves as a new entity who had left our respective families as individuals, and were now free to return to our families as that new entity. Never again in the past 43 years have we felt a need to leave the day before Christmas to demonstrate that we have "left"!

Of course as our own nuclear family grew we started making our own Christmas traditions, as a new family. And this at times meant we did not spend Christmas at the family farm. In this sense the "leaving" takes new forms and needs constant re-evaluation. For example we are now at the stage where our children have their

own nuclear families, and like us some 43 years ago, are having to work out what the “leaving” means for them at this stage of their lives.

What is clear to us is that one cannot be prescriptive about practically what such “leaving” requires in different situations. However, what is fundamental in the creation ordinance about marriage, is that the man and the woman in their own minds and hearts must “leave” their respective families, “cleave”, become a new entity, and then return to their respective families as this new entity. Where the husband or wife does not leave, in the long run the marriage will not flourish.

CHAPTER 8

Sex – “becoming one flesh”

... and hold fast/cleave to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one flesh...

Jesus in Mark 10 verses 7-8

Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

Genesis 2 verses 24-25

As we have already said, we have now been married for 43 years. It is interesting to reflect on how during this period our “becoming one flesh” has been, and continues to be, fundamental to the stability and health of our marriage.

What has been particularly interesting is how this has played out at different stages of our lives, and the different needs it meets for Keith as a man, and for Ros as a woman.

But before we get there, we need to turn to Scripture to see what it teaches about sex.

There are few areas of our lives as people where Scripture has been more misrepresented than when it comes to sex. To make this point when he addresses younger audiences on the issue, Keith’s opening line invariably is “Sex is lekker!”⁵

When dealing with marriage, Jesus specifically quotes the end of Genesis 2, central to which is “becoming one flesh”.

He thus affirms the centrality of sex in marriage. In a nutshell, in Scripture Jesus has not set limits to spoil our fun – those limits are there to enhance our enjoyment of His gift of sex.

⁵ In Keith’s book, *Decolonising Jesus*, there is a chapter titled, “Sex is lekker”, where he deals with Jesus and sex. We have reproduced part of that chapter here. It is freely available for download on the website: www.keithmatthee.com

As the one who thought up the idea in the first place, one would have thought He is best qualified to give guidance about how to enjoy sex to its fullest potential! (Far more so than current so called “sexologists”- who obviously at times can be of assistance.)

And as we in effect have seen, for Him the key to good sex is the trust which flows from being in a lifelong monogamous commitment to becoming one flesh in everything which that involves, not least of all sex.

Jesus would have been very aware of the words which follow His quoted extract - “and they were both naked, the man and the woman, and were not ashamed.” Thus there would be a lack of self-consciousness and mutual trust which flows from such a lifelong monogamous commitment. This simply underlines the teaching of Jesus that central to good sex is mutual trust and a context of a life-long unconditional commitment to one another.

Likewise He would have been aware of other parts of Scripture which leave no doubt that sex is not only something central to ensuring the survival of humanity, but also a sensuous gift from Him to be enjoyed.

There simply is no biblical basis for the argument that when it comes to sex women must just grin and bear it so that they can have children, that sex is somehow dirty and a necessary evil. **It clearly is a gift thought out and created by Jesus, amongst other things for our pleasure.**

Timothy and Kathy Keller write: “God not only allows sex within marriage but strongly commands it. In the book of Proverbs, husbands are encouraged to let their wives’ breasts fill them with delight and be intoxicated by their sexual love. The book Song of Solomon does much barefaced rejoicing in the delights of sexual love in marriage. Old Testament scholar Tremper Longman writes: ‘The role of the woman throughout the Song of Solomon is truly astounding, especially in light of its ancient origins. It is the woman, not the man, who is the dominant voice throughout the poems that make up the Song. She is the one who seeks, pursues, initiates. In Song 5:10-16 she boldly exclaims her physical attraction [‘His abdomen is like a polished ivory tusk, decorated with sapphires...’ (14)]. Most English translations hesitate in this verse. The Hebrew is quite erotic, and most translators cannot bring themselves to bring out the obvious meaning... .

This is a prelude to their love-making. There is no shy, shamed, mechanical movement under the sheets. Rather, the two stand before each other, aroused, feeling no shame, but only joy in each other's sexuality... ' ”

The misrepresentation of Jesus as regards sex comes in two forms. On the one hand there are people within the church who struggle with this picture of Jesus not only saying yes to our enjoying the sensuous delights of sex, but in fact being the One who thought up the whole idea in the first place! And so through verbal gymnastics and the distortion of Scripture they seek to portray Jesus as saying that sex is no more than a necessary evil for procreation.

On the other hand there are people who unquestioningly buy into this negative picture because it is useful propaganda in their quest to rubbish Jesus and His church. We find it ironic that this latter group, whilst usually claiming to have as its foundation the modern scientific methodology, will simply buy into this picture of Jesus without any independent research of their own into Scripture.

Of course the teaching of Jesus concerning sex goes way beyond it merely being something for personal pleasure. And here we touch on issues concerning the soundness and practicality of Jesus's teaching. We briefly highlight some of the other fundamental dimensions of Jesus's teaching on sex, all of which are consistent with our own experience of marriage these past 43 or so years.

Our consumer society would have us believe that sex is only about pleasure and in effect that we are no different to animals. That it is a natural appetite which has to be satisfied, without any limits. (Another version of this is when spouses get involved in an affair, they say: "I did not choose it, it just happened" – as if we are no different to the animal kingdom ruled only by instinct.) In a nutshell, our consumer society sees love and sex as synonyms. It also fails completely to heed Jeremiah's warning that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick"⁶.

Jesus says this is to trivialise a profound gift from Him. As the Kellers argue, this is to miss completely the deep purpose of this gift.

6 See footnote 1.

Firstly, Jesus in effect teaches that sex, “becoming one flesh”, is a sign of the marriage union and the means to accomplish it. (This has affected the secular law to the extent that where a marriage cannot be consummated, the marriage can be annulled as opposed to there having to be a divorce.) His teaching is thus diametrically opposed to Kahlil Gibran’s oft quoted poem (“On Marriage”) at weddings, even in church wedding ceremonies, which amongst other images to make his point, talks of two separate trees strengthening one another but remaining separate from one another. Or the modern trend for husbands and wives to have different surnames. It matters not what name the husband and wife chooses, but in terms of His teaching their sharing a surname is symbolic of their becoming one flesh.

Secondly, the words He quotes from Genesis 2 teaches that throughout marriage there is an ongoing need regularly to renew our covenant with and renew our commitment to our spouse. Sex between a husband and wife is the unique way to do that. As the Kellers write: “Indeed, sex is perhaps the most powerful God-created way to help you give your entire self to another human being. Sex is God’s appointed way for two people to reciprocally say to one another ‘I belong completely, permanently, and exclusively to you.’ You must not use sex to say anything less... So, according to (Jesus), a covenant is necessary for sex. It creates a place of security for vulnerability and intimacy. But though a marriage covenant is necessary for sex, sex is also necessary for the maintenance of the covenant. It is your covenant renewal service.”

As Keith told the husbands at a marriage course we led, “Now guys, if that is not good news, what is!”

Thirdly, rooting sex within a covenantal relationship mindset also has a major practical effect on the act of lovemaking. A consumer mindset will be most concerned about how to get sexual pleasure. A covenant mindset will be most concerned about how to give pleasure to the other person. In this regard our own personal experience demonstrates the soundness of Jesus’s teaching. When we are able to give pleasure to one another, we invariably find that both of us receive the greatest sexual pleasure.

Central to Jesus's teaching on sex is a context of complete freedom from all fear - fear of pregnancy, fear of getting caught, fear of venereal disease, fear of guilt, fear of a failure to perform, fear of not satisfying one's partner, fear of one's partner not accepting your body, fear of our bodies being too fat or flabby, or whatever. As one person has put it, Jesus in effect teaches that to enjoy really good sex there has to be a reckless abandonment by the parties.

And of course such an absence from fear is only truly available within the context of a permanent and life long relationship between one man and one woman. And we might add anecdotally, from our personal experience as one matures in one's relationship within the marriage so the trust grows, fear subsides and reckless abandonment increases, especially when the children leave the house eventually! And for the solace of the older folk, over time, quality replaces quantity!

Which brings us to how this chapter started - how this gift has played out at different stages of our life, and the different needs it meets for Keith as a man, and for Ros as a woman.

Since we started writing this book, we have had pause to reflect on this. Part of our culture today, is to dismiss all the "ancient paths" Jeremiah speaks of⁷, in the name of modernity. For us one of those ancient paths is that certain things are sacred, and to be spoken of with modesty and discretion.

We have decided that this is one of those issues. In our counselling one on one or with couples we have been frank and direct on the role sex plays in marriage at different stages, for men and women. We have decided that a book is not a place for that discussion. Best for such a discussion to happen within the context of a trust relationship between individuals or where one is counselling a couple. (We obviously would be available for such counselling if any reader is desirous of it.)

⁷ Jeremiah 6 verse 16.

CHAPTER 9

Sacrifice, a dirty word today!

For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? . . . For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.

Jesus in Mark 9 verses 35-38

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live: yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.

Galatians 2 verse 20

With the arrival of our first born, Daniel, everything changed!

Before him we had many theories about raising children. After him we desperately looked for survival kits!

Just before our marriage Keith stayed with a wonderful Christian couple. They had twin girls who at that stage were still very young. Keith was very critical of their parenting skills and with great authority told Ros what they were doing wrong (but never told them).

A few months after Daniel's birth, Keith wrote to them. He confessed to them that he had been critical of them and asked for their forgiveness!

We had decided that in raising our children as a general rule one of us would always be at home when they were there, up until they left school one day. Part of this decision was that we would not delegate the raising of our children to a third party. Practically this meant that Ros would bear the brunt of this decision of ours. (In retrospect, we think we were too rigid in this regard – some help would have been great, particularly when they were still small and at times we were seriously sleep deprived!)

At the time Roslyn had completed all of her requirements for a Masters in Psychology, bar a dissertation. We were based in Queensburgh, near to Pinetown. Keith's job involved moving between 7 different campuses in Durban, Pinetown and Pietermaritzburg. We only had one vehicle.

The result of all of this was a really really tough time for Ros, not least of all as Daniel was very active and a terrible sleeper! The hilly physical features of Queensburgh also did not help – all directly up, or directly down, far away from any shops or parks.

Although Keith had “retired” from his marathon, Dusi and Comrades efforts, and initially at night insisted on waking up and sitting with Ros every time Daniel woke up and had to be fed, given what was to come he had no idea of how tough it really was on Ros.

This all changed when Daniel was about 6 - 7 months old. Keith negotiated a two month unpaid leave period to free Roslyn up to finalise her dissertation. (Her title? *Problems And Prospects Of Counselling Women For A Professional Career In South Africa*. The short title would have been - *How to be a mother and a professional, if at all possible!*⁸) For that period he would take over all the responsibilities of Ros, except for breast feeding (this was before he could have self identified as a “chest feeder”!).

The impact of those two months remain with Keith until the present day, some 40 years later. Soon after that experience he led a seminar at a student conference with the title, “Reflections of a house husband”. In any casual conversation, even today, if any woman or man uses the word “only” before describing themselves or their wife as a stay at home mother/wife, he will with great passion set the record straight!

If ever Keith had second thoughts about giving up his various athletic pursuits on Daniel's arrival, this two month period for Keith caste that decision in stone. Up until then he thought he was making a huge sacrifice for Ros and Daniel. Only after this did he realise that his “sacrifice” paled into insignificance when compared to Roslyn's sacrifice.

8 If anyone is interested to see the dissertation they can contact Ros at rosmatthee@gmail.com

Despite unending obstacles, including the death of her supervisor at a crucial stage of the dissertation, the emigration of another one and the arrival of our second son, Matthew in 1984, Ros managed to complete her dissertation and register as a Psychologist with the Medical and Dental Council in 1985.

It was only when our daughter, Bryony, arrived in 1988 that we employed someone to help with our children. (Thankfully when we moved to Grahamstown in 1985, Roslyn discovered playgroups and other moms and dads who had taken the same decision as us.)

Although Roslyn will object, during this time Keith saw in practice in her what Paul meant when he wrote, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me”.

In a nutshell, the way of Christ, in this case as parents, involves a daily dying to self. And with this, given that we only have a certain amount of emotional resilience and time at our disposal, **comes a very practical need for prioritising.**

In determining these priorities, the spirit of the age today is that self must be our point of departure. And so the lie is sold, and bought, that mothers and fathers can fulfil their roles as mothers and fathers without there being an effect on their progress at work, or without cutting down on their recreational pursuits, especially fathers and their sporting pursuits.

Of course underlying this lie is a deeper question – **where do we find our identity?** In our jobs? Our sporting achievements? Our fame? Our bank balance? Our physical appearance?

Or are we secure in finding our identity in the self sacrificial love of a mother or a father, a wife, a husband? Whose applause do we yearn for? (Roslyn deals with this at greater length in her chapter on being a Godly woman.)

Nothing in our married life, up until the present day, has helped us understand more clearly what Christ meant about dying to self and counting the cost before we claim Him as our Lord and Saviour, than trying to be parents to our children in a manner which is consistent with Christ’s teaching. His blending of selfless and sacrificial love, truth, gentleness and telling it as it is, has been and continues to be the major challenge in our marriage. We simply would not be able to cope without the Holy Spirit.

And just as we start feeling sorry for ourselves or that we should get some recognition for our sacrifices, Christ's words in Luke 17 shock us back into exactly how different His way is from the world's way: **"So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, 'We are unworthy servants, we have only done what was our duty'."**

CHAPTER 10

On being a Biblical man, husband and father

*Then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature. And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there He put the man whom He had formed...The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden **to work it and keep/protect it**. And the Lord God commanded the man saying, 'You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die'.*

Genesis 2 verses 7-8, 15-17

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her, that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that He might present the church to Himself in splendour, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.

Ephesians 5 verses 25 – 28

If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.

Luke 14 verses 26-27

Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Ephesians 6 verse 4

*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven
Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.*

Matthew 5 verses 3-4

My early example of what it was to be a man, husband and father predominantly came from my late father.

Let me add some details about him in addition to what has been highlighted in an earlier chapter. He was from very humble “bywoner” stock. His father was gentle and his mother fierce. He had two sisters.

After some 4 years of schooling, at the age of about 13, he joined his father as a labourer on a farm between Bredasdorp and Cape Agulhas. Their Afrikaner boss made them go to his back door when they needed to see or talk to him. He used to tell me of his vivid memories of on many occasions being hungry.

To supplement their income, often from cutting down trees and bushes and making “droppers” from that, he would catch and break in wild horses. He still had the scars to show me as evidence of these endeavours.

To get from point A to point B involved covering long distances running and walking. The fruit of this, combined with obvious natural athletic ability, helped lead him eventually to be able to escape the cycle of poverty and the subsistence lifestyle of his family.

He entered and won a middle distance race in Bredasdorp. The prize was a bicycle. This changed his life. All of a sudden he became far more mobile.

It was this bicycle which allowed him as a 16 year old to cycle to a dance in Cape Agulhas – it was in about 1939/1940. That evening the girls present showed no interest in him whatsoever. They only had eyes for the men in uniform. That night he made his decision – he was going to enlist, come hell or high water. I might add that at this stage he did not even know about the existence of Adolf Hitler.

About a year later he lied about his age, enlisted and took a train to Cape Town. On arrival he heard a strange language – it turned out to be English!

His military service started in North Africa, and then on to Italy. At the end of the war he found himself in Austria. He volunteered to stay on until 1946 to help with getting soldiers back home. His stand out memory of the war was him being the sole survivor in his tent after a German air attack – he was shaving and all the others were still lying down. This made him a fatalist and he always used to say, “When it is your time it is your time!” And of course there was the memory which

always made him cry when he heard it - Bing Crosby and the Andrews Sisters singing White Christmas – they had done that for the gathered servicemen in Italy, and the ground was thick with snow. One can only imagine what an impact this would have had on a young man of about 20, some 10 000 kms away from his bywoner family near Bredasdorp, where snow was even more rare than English!

On his return at the beginning of 1946, he joined the South African Police Force. His first beat was in Addington, Durban. It was there that he met my mom, who could not speak a word of Afrikaans. Fortunately his time “up North” gave him a basic grasp of English.

When I arrived in 1954 he had already been a detective for a number of years. He was then a Sergeant. A few years later I remember him studying at night in our garage. It was for his police matric, which he needed to become a commissioned officer.

He retired in 1986. Just before he retired he was the Divisional CID Head of Northern Natal. His career also included a number of years as the Head of Durban's Murder and Robbery Squad. A very tough and very effective squad - he remembered the one murder matter where he did not get a conviction!

He was fearless and imposing. Whilst heading up the Murder and Robbery Squad, he never carried his service revolver – he believed stolen firearms were a significant cause of violent crimes and on principle refused to carry his. I personally on a few occasions witnessed him dealing with a very dangerous situation by his sheer and intimidating presence.

He was able to sum up a situation quickly and act decisively.

I also witnessed him physically overcoming and subduing a wannabe robber. And also swimming into a raging river to save 4 people and a horse. This act of bravery led to poems being written about him by a black poet - the people saved were all black people. But the powers that be at the time did not believe it warranted a medal for bravery. (I might add that neither did the ANC government when I in 1995 alerted them to this scandalous decision by the Nationalist government.)

I saw the evidence of his unfaithfulness to my mom. He also had difficulty seeing another person's point of view. He had no problem with using corporal punishment

when disciplining my brother and me, at times severely.

Although he never hugged me, he spent hours with me when it came to my love of horses.

At his eightieth birthday he used his speech to highlight where my brother and I could still improve – my brother was a colonel at the time and I was acting as a judge.

Perhaps the dominant memory I have of him, is always kneeling next to his bed when he prayed, whoever was present.

He died some 12 years ago.

Like all fathers, to a lesser or greater extent, he in different ways has influenced me in a positive manner, when tested against Scripture's account of a Godly man.

However what I continue to be vigilant of is any influence he might still have on me which is inconsistent with Scripture. I do this so that I intentionally, with the help of the Holy Spirit, can deal with it and not use it as a rationalisation to avoid responsibility for me as a man, husband and father, where my conduct is not in line with Scripture. **A ploy central to the “victim” culture of today.**

I now turn to Scripture when it comes to me as a man, husband and father.

A number of things are clear from Scripture.

Adam was formed by God from dust, carbon. He was created before God planted a garden in Eden.

Adam was placed in Eden “to work it and keep/protect it.”

The command that he should “eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil he shall not eat”, was given by God to Adam.

Eve was created by God, for it was not good for Adam to be alone.

Although Eve first ate from the forbidden tree, God first went to Adam to give an account of Eve's and his disobedience.

The challenge for me as a man is to distinguish between what is merely a cultural prescription of what it is to be a man, and what is deeply ingrained in the very

creation ordinances about me as a man. The same would apply to me as husband and father.

What is clear from Genesis 3 verse 16, is that any “ruling” over a woman by virtue of being a man is a consequence of the fall⁹. It is the antithesis of the creation ordinances we find in Genesis 1 and 2.

What then can we extract about men which is part of the creation ordinances in Genesis 1 and 2?

We were created outside of the garden of Eden. (Eve was created inside the garden.) If I look back on my life, indeed if I look at myself today as a 68 year old, there clearly is a deep seated and ingrained part of me which sees almost everything as a “hunt”. A silly example was given in the hilarious play, *Defending the Caveman*. When I go to the shops I go to buy a specific item, not to browse (with no intention of buying anything). Ros is the exact opposite. In fact any close look at couples in shopping malls will show that Roslyn and I are not unique in this regard!

One of the saddest sights for me is when I see a “retired” man with lifeless eyes walking behind his animated wife in a shopping mall. In my mind there is no doubt that what is happening there, is a failure to recognise that men need a “hunt”, an adventure, a purpose with risk, until death. (That is also why men prefer hymns which challenge them to action, as opposed to dwelling on feelings.)

However what is equally important in Genesis is that at the same time the purpose of that adventure, hunt, is **to work** and **keep/protect** the garden where God puts him soon after he has been created. This working and protecting includes the responsibility of naming and looking after all living things in creation.

This has very practical consequences for men, as men, husbands and fathers. Not least of all in determining their priorities and use of time and resources. (A wise old minister once summed up for me what my priorities should be – Christ, Roslyn, my children and only then my work, church, friends and finally personal recreation.)

⁹ In my book, *Decolonising Jesus*, there is a chapter “Jesus and women” where I deal at length with this.

One of the great failures of men today is a failure to prioritise, to sacrifice, to ensure that the wilderness in them does not in any manner undermine or compromise their responsibilities when it comes to working and keeping/protecting the particular garden God has entrusted to them.

For example, what is telling is how often today fathers with young children can rationalise long hours at work and then spending hours pursuing their sporting/hobby desires, so that they can have some downtime because they work so hard! (And often wives out of love for their husbands buy into this, or are manipulated into it!)

This is in direct conflict with the said creation ordinances. What it is, is once again Adam along with Eve being seduced by something which is “good”, a “delight” and to be “desired”, that we read of in Genesis 3. So all about self gratification and actualisation, the exact opposite of the selfless nature of love demonstrated by Christ on the cross. And the challenge to husbands and fathers is to love their wives and children as Christ loved the world.

One of the big lies in this regard is that we can do both¹⁰. Sacrificially love our wives and children and pursue our careers and desires **without sacrifice which hurts**. Quite simply, not only do we not have enough minutes in a day for this, we also do not have the emotional and physical resilience to live out this lie. **Something must give.**

Let us take the illustration of a husband and father of young children who decides to run the Comrades Marathon. From personal experience, mentally and time-wise the Comrades becomes all pervasive as he approaches the big day. And so our wives and children simply are no longer our priority, despite paying lip service to that. Furthermore, when one trains it is not only the time spent on the training run which counts. The recovery period must be considered. And so a long training run on the weekend might take 4 – 6 hours, but the physical and mental reality is that it takes the rest of that particular day to recover. So even if we spend the rest of the day with our wives and children, we simply are not able physically and mentally to give ourselves completely to them. And then come Monday, we are back at work, feeling sorry for ourselves! (Again, I urge all men, and women, to listen to *Cats in The Cradle*, referred to in footnote 10.)

10 Listen to the words of the moving song, *Cats in The Cradle*, by Harry Chapin.

Other sports and hobbies would be no different, in principle. The reality is that when one gets married and has children, there must be sacrifice which hurts. This demonstrates clearly that it is no longer us who live, but Christ who lives in us.

The church often feels that to call a spade a spade in this regard would drive men away from Christ. My personal experience as a man has been the exact opposite. This radical call to total obedience by Christ, this dying to self, is what attracted me, and continues to attract me, to being a disciple of Jesus. **At a more profound level it is this challenge to total obedience and dying to self which now satisfies the hunter in me!**

Another fundamental reality about how God created us as men, is the responsibility He gave us to lead, defend, work and protect the particular garden He gives us. Where a husband and father does not do this it is at variance with how He created us. And the rotten fruit of this tree can be seen daily in many modern marriages.

Modern society aggressively is not only undermining this creation ordinance, it is actively giving an alternative, a counterfeit, to how things are and must be. And once again satan is using noble sounding words and concepts to do this. And so the counterfeit is sold to us as something which is “good”, a “delight”, to be “desired”, “wise” and above all makes us our own man. And so we become “like God”, our own god. For what can be more noble than being completely autonomous? Doing things, to quote Frank Sinatra, “My way.”

And along the way we are duped into abandoning our God given responsibilities because we reject “male toxicity”. Because we need to become more in touch with “our feminine self.” Because we do not want to “rule” or abuse our wives and children. Because we want to be a “modern and progressive man”, not a Neanderthal! And of course it is a wonderful excuse to avoid the inevitable conflict which comes from exercising male leadership, or simply just to be lazy!

This is all seeing leadership and responsibility through the lens of Genesis 3, a fallen and sinful lens. As opposed to the costly and humble lens of Christ exercising His leadership by washing feet and submitting to the cross. And so we get to be seen as “progressive” whilst avoiding a very demanding responsibility.

I end off with two very personal examples of just how tough it is to be a Biblical man.

As already indicated, Roslyn and I have now been married for 43 years. At a profound level we have grown into becoming one. However this has not let me off the hook as regards my responsibility to love her as her husband. The toughest part of this is by far that I **in effect** must present her one day to the Lord “in splendour, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.” (**Confusing loving her with pleasing her simply will not get the job done!**)

My daily struggle in this regard has nothing to do with the spiritual state of Roslyn. In fact I cannot think of many husbands whose wives make this responsibility less onerous than Roslyn does for me. My struggle is to take self completely out of the equation in my relationship with Ros. For only when I can achieve this will I be able to comply with my responsibility as her husband.

In this regard I find great solace in St Paul’s words: “Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.”

And the non negotiable first steps towards this are succinctly summed up in the first two beatitudes Jesus taught us in Matthew 5. A profound insight into my sinful nature, my spiritual poverty. And a disposition which daily mourns about this. Only then can I (daily) be used by the Holy Spirit to represent Jesus Christ in my role as the husband of Ros.

The second example is the costly nature of my role as father. Throughout my 40 years as a father, not least of all these past 20 or so years, it has been extremely painful for me never to forget that my responsibility as a father is not to please my children, but to love them. And that such love requires me at all times to be obedient to Jesus Christ and His truth and holiness, even when my children do not grasp this. I also now better understand the pain of Jesus’s words that those who do his Father’s will are his mother, father, brother, sister.

In other words, the best way to love my children is not to make idols of them. For them to see very clearly and practically that at all times my first loyalty must be to Jesus Christ and His Word revealed in Scripture. So that they for themselves can

go and test a decision of theirs, and later of their children, not by their own, or indeed my, opinions. **But by Scripture.** And in the process grasp that they too fall short of the glory of God and are in urgent need of repentance and forgiveness, through the death of Jesus.

In today's narcissistic and anything goes world gone mad, I cannot think of a greater act of love, and gift, to my children and grandchildren. Even though, as Bonhoeffer said, although free, God's grace is not cheap. It costs us everything we have.

As an intentional decision of faith by me, I believe that my calling sin, sin, whilst offering Christ's gift of grace and forgiveness and setting out the costly consequence to their lifestyles of God's grace, all our children and grandchildren will eventually be drawn to Christ, as I was.

And the challenge to me is not to confuse in my or their minds what my opinion is, with what Scripture clearly teaches. As I have said elsewhere, what Scripture teaches on the big issues of life, whilst often being hard, is not complicated. We try and make it complicated to avoid the costly short term consequences of being obedient to those teachings.

Of course in this process I at all times need to remain sensitive to and vigilant of Scripture's command to me to be patient, gentle, humble, forgiving, not self righteous and "not (to) provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." And where I fail ask for their forgiveness and do whatever I am able to do to set things right.

Scripture is clear - setting out to please Ros, my children and grandchildren in the long run will fail them, just as Adam failed Eve in Genesis 3.

As a man not only must I remain ever vigilant to counterfeits of the real thing being used by satan to deceive me. It is my special responsibility as man, husband and father in humility, gentleness, clarity and boldness always to warn whoever comes across my path not to allow counterfeit gods to replace God. **And that God is a righteous and holy God, not to be mocked.**

CHAPTER 11

On being a Biblical woman, wife and mother

The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.

Isaiah 40 verse 8

But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said: 'This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.'the man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living.

Genesis 2 and 3, verses 20-23 and 20

Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.

Proverbs 31 verse 30

As mentioned earlier in this book, I grew up with a mother who broke convention – she was a well respected farmer and cattle judge in a man's world. She made her mark. My father distinguished himself in the business world and as the Chairman of Rhodes University Council. He was very well liked and in his field was esteemed both in South Africa and abroad. He was wise and a gentleman.

I grew up in a secure home where there was no doubt about my parents' love and respect for one another, and for all of their children. Maybe partially because of this, I never really felt a need for God, except perhaps to get me into the first hockey team! I saw Christians as people who used their faith as a crutch for their own inadequacies.

And then in my last year of schooling Jesus dramatically revealed Himself to me in a dream¹¹. Wow! For a while I was enveloped by His tremendous love, which set

11 If anyone is interested in the details of this dream I would encourage them to contact me at rosmatthee@gmail.com

me on a path to find out more about Him, and what He required of me.

Along the way, both when I was single and then together with Keith, I have been learning of God's "counter-culture". The older I get, the more I realise that this is the only way for us to live the best, the most useful and the most fulfilled life possible – for Jesus Christ, for ourselves, and for those around us.

Also, we have a perspective on life that goes beyond this material world and all its brokenness and difficulties. **Like Jesus, we know where we come from and where we are going to** (John 13 verse 3). We are so very precious to the Lord, the One who made our ever expanding universe, and this is where we get our self-worth from: "For God so loved the world that **He gave His only Son**, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3 verse 16). What an enormous sacrifice for us!

God doesn't care about our achievements, He looks at the **attitude of our heart**. He prizes the poor in spirit, those who mourn their sinfulness, the meek, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart and the persecuted (Matthew 5 verses 3 - 12).

These attitudes are chosen by us from a position of **strength** – being confident in the love of God, and from grateful hearts for Jesus's love for us and His obedience to His Father that led to his sacrificial death for us.

In this way, God uses us to help fulfil his plan – as we pray in the Lord's prayer: "... Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven (Matthew 6 verse 10).

How then, does this shape me as a woman, wife and mother?

As a woman, Jesus asks me to keep on learning to love the Lord my God with all my heart, all my soul and all my mind (Matthew 22 verse 37).

More and more I must find my security, identity and love in Him, unlike today's culture where we try and get it affirmed by all and sundry, friend and stranger!

To feel secure and loved by Christ brings a beauty and tranquillity to a woman that shines from her face, and she has no need to dress to catch attention! In fact, if we dress sensuously, we will cause men to sin in their thoughts, so we need to be considerate of that (Matthew 5 verses 27 – 28).

Jesus also asks me to love my neighbour as myself (Matthew 22 verse 39). Therefore I must want and act according to what would be the best for that person, even if I don't like them. And Paul asks us as Christians to **submit to one another**, out of reverence for Christ (Ephesians 5 verse 21). **This sets the tone for marriage.**

It is with these attitudes that we look at Christian marriage.

Choose the man you are going to marry very carefully, because we are called on to submit to him (Ephesians 5 verse 22), and to have respect for him (Ephesians 5 verse 33). This becomes so much harder if he is not a Christian.

As wives, we need to care for our husbands by submitting to everything that would encourage them to become more Christ-like. Our submission also needs to make it easier for him to present us to the Lord without stain or blemish (Ephesians 5 verses 26 – 28). He certainly has the harder job!

Just as Jesus voluntarily submitted to the Father, but was not less than the Father (Philippians 2 verses 5 – 8), so we submit from our own choice, and are not less than our husbands. However, we, like Jesus, have a different function and role. We are helpers (Genesis 2 verse 18) with a huge responsibility!

Our husbands are answerable to the Lord for us. But we are the first and best consultants when they have to make a decision that affects the family. Keith will make that final decision, but not before he first has discussed it thoroughly with me. If I do not have peace about it, he will wait until we both have peace before taking it.

If I try to love Keith as I do myself, I will try to encourage him to develop his gifts and talents so that he can be better used by Christ. This almost always will mean sacrifice from me. I know he will do the same for me. I don't have to fight him for what I think are "my rights", because I know he is on my side and answerable to the Lord, as I am. **After all, we are working for the same kingdom, neither his nor mine!**

As I submit to his spiritual leadership and his responsibility to the Lord, and as I show respect for him, it makes it much harder for him to treat me badly. But this certainly doesn't mean one becomes a doormat. That is not good for anyone in the family, and is not what submission means!

Also, if you're asked to do something that you know is not right in the eyes of the Lord, obviously along with Peter and John we must ask our husbands; Should we obey man rather than God? (Acts 4 verse 19)

All the above comes through an act of our **will**, and we can only do it with the help of the Holy Spirit. (Submitting does not come naturally to me as a sinner! Genesis 3 verse 16b.) As we seek Him and submit to Him, we will show His fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5 verses 22 – 23).

As mothers, we have the awesome responsibility of being the main influence on our children, especially in their formative years, but also beyond those years. (Men bring another aspect to parenting.) In this way, we can influence a nation! What a responsibility that is! How important is that? Can anything be more important for them and for nations? (Just think for example of a Susanna Wesley – without her influence on John and Charles, the eighteenth century revival would not have been possible, a revival which **amongst many other things** led to the abolition of slavery and child labour, and also to a radical reduction of illiteracy amongst the poor.)

We need to teach our children that they are greatly loved by God, and therefore to love and be answerable to God alone, and to care for one another, especially those not as privileged as themselves. As mothers if we mainly look to our own interests, our rights, our professions, so will our children. And they will not know what sacrificial love is! They will grow up trying to get what they want, and only sacrifice when it serves their needs. Obviously there is no guarantee that notwithstanding our efforts, our children will still make self-centred choices. However, with the passing of time our sacrificial love of them will hopefully break through to them, aided and abetted by another fundamental responsibility of a mother, to pray without ceasing for their children!

Finally, let us look at Proverbs 31 verses 10 - 31, **“The Wife of Noble Character”**:

*“An excellent wife who can find?
She is far more precious than jewels.
The heart of her husband trusts in her,
and he will have no lack of gain.
She does him good, and not harm,
all the days of her life.
She seeks wool and flax,
and works with willing hands.
She is like the ships of the merchant;
she brings her food from afar.
She rises while it is yet night
and provides food for her household
and portions for her maidens.
She considers a field and buys it;
with the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard.
She dresses herself with strength
and makes her arms strong.
She perceives that her merchandise is profitable.
Her lamp does not go out at night.
She puts her hands to the distaff,
and her hands hold the spindle.
She opens her hand to the poor
and reaches out her hands to the needy.
She is not afraid of snow for her household,
for all her household are clothed in scarlet.
She makes bed coverings for herself;
her clothing is fine linen and purple.
Her husband is known in the gates
when he sits among the elders of the land.
She makes linen garments and sells them;*

*she delivers sashes to the merchant.
Strength and dignity are her clothing,
and she laughs at the time to come.
She opens her mouth with wisdom,
and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.
She looks well to the ways of her household
and does not eat the bread of idleness.
Her children rise up and call her blessed;
her husband also, and he praises her:
Many women have done excellently,
but you surpass them all.
Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain,
but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.
Give her of the fruit of her hands,
and let her works praise her in the gates.”*

It seems to me that there is nothing that a woman can't do, and that all who are associated with her should benefit greatly.

As women, wives and mothers, putting the Lord first will always put life in perspective and get our priorities in order, so that we do not waste our lives chasing the wind. Obviously this is an ongoing process, always requiring the Holy Spirit, and often involving blood, sweat and tears from us, and a fair dollop of humility, not to mention a sense of humour!

And to those women being seduced by the culture of today, which militantly teaches that a woman who wants to stay at home and look after the family is a failure, **I challenge any woman who has not made that choice to sit down with me and compare notes¹²!**

12 My Master's thesis dealt with this very question – as already stated before, If anyone is interested to see it they can contact me by email at rosmathee@gmail.com

CHAPTER 12

Divorce

*But from the beginning of the creation, God made them male and female. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh, so then they are no longer two, but one flesh. Wherefore **what God has joined together, let not man separate.***

Jesus in Mark 10 verses 6 - 9

You have heard that it was said to those of old, you shall not commit adultery. But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. . . . Furthermore it has been said, whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce. But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.

Jesus in Matthew 5 verses 27, 28, 31 and 32

Jesus said to her, 'Go, call your husband, and come here.' The woman answered him, 'I have no husband'. Jesus said to her, 'You are right in saying, I have no husband, for you have had 5 husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true.' . . . And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, 'He told me all that I ever did' . . . Then they said to the woman, 'Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard Him and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.'

John 4 verses 16, 17, 18, 39 and 42

‘He who is without sin, let him throw the first stone at her’ When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, ‘Woman, where are your accusers? Has no one condemned you?’ She said, ‘No one, Lord’. And Jesus said to her, ‘Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more’.

John 8 verses 7, 10 and 11

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

1 John 1 verse 8

Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For ‘the two’, He says, ‘shall become one flesh’. . . . Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.

1 Corinthians 6 verses 16, 19 and 20

As seen earlier in this book, an illustration Keith once heard and often uses, is that of the law of gravity. It cannot be broken, and if we think we can fly, this reality will be illustrated when we hit the concrete floor!

Likewise God’s moral creation ordinances. We are free not to abide by them, but we cannot break them. They will break us when we do not listen to them. So at one level it is not so much God judging us for not abiding by them, it is simply experiencing the devastating consequences of being broken by them when we do not abide by them. In effect we bring judgment on ourselves.

There is no more a tragic illustration of this than when it comes to divorce.

God’s creation ordinance is clear – what God has put together let no man put asunder. Where there has been a “becoming one flesh”, a “cleaving” (the Hebrew means a gluing together), the results of undoing that involves a ripping apart of the man and woman, and all the fall out which goes with that. Not least of all where there are children involved.

Putting on her professional hat, combined with a pastoral heart, Ros once put together the following letter for someone with children considering divorce – we quote parts of it:

“ ... Take, for example the damage done to:

- 1 Your children will grow up in a second-best home. Having 2 homes with only one parent and a step parent in each. They will have to move between the 2 homes, whether they like it or not, and they will have to compete for your attention. ... Your children will have to compete with step brothers or sisters who might resent you and your children. Your children might feel second-best, because any new baby born to your side, or your ex husband's side, will have a permanent home. The baby's own mother and father will both be in the home all the time, and will have new grandparents that are not their grandparents.
- 2 I have counselled many people and children in this position as a psychologist, and the children have always longed for both parents and a secure home. Some parents have recognised this, been sad and tried their best to address this. However most have believed their children were coping ok, (which they were not), and to me it was always wishful thinking.
- 3 If there is a third party involved, your children will also get to realise that the man/woman with their mother/father is the one central to breaking up the family. (I know it is not as simple as that and of the other party's role in the breakdown, but the third party narrative is simple and uncomplicated and will be the one which will be best understood by a young and teenage child.... One of the sure ways of minimising the damage of the divorce on your children is that you sacrifice your relationship with the third party even for a year or so. **That is the way of true love - sacrifice. In the long run you will never regret it.**)
- 4 Then there is the damage to your and the other party's close family, which needs no elaboration. Such damage will be ongoing. This includes increasing the risk considerably of the various children affected, one day rejecting marriage and choosing supposed safer counterfeits for marriage, eg. living together. Trust in them when it comes to relationships also can be undermined. This obviously all will have consequences for the wider society they live in.

Part of the cruel lie of divorce and counterfeits to marriage, is that it only affects the man and the woman making the destructive choices. Without any doubt there will be ongoing ripple effects affecting an ever increasing circle of people.

- 5 Any honest assessment of the ongoing fruits of a divorce, compounded by the presence of a third party, is that they will be destructive to the wider members of the family and community in which the parties live.
- 6 Towards the end of the letter a reminder was given by Ros that “The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately sick.” (See earlier reference to **Jeremiah 17 verse 9**.) **So make the right choice based on will, not emotions.**

(For the sake of completion, Roslyn’s letter ended with the Good News of Jesus Christ, dealt with at the end of this chapter.)

In today’s self centred world, people are slaves to that deceit, their “own truth”. And that “truth” increasingly claims we have the power to break a creation ordinance when it comes to marriage and divorce. (Included in this obviously is the so called “modern family” – living together, same sex unions, “open” unions, etc. For any person who has eyes to see, we as a society already are reaping the whirlwind for this, as God’s creation ordinance of marriage breaks us as individuals and as a society. And that ordinance never will be seduced or fooled by any counterfeit, even if the Constitutional Court says it is okay, wonderful and to be celebrated!)

Obvious outstanding questions include, what about God’s grace where we like Eve have sought to be like God and redefined good and evil, **OR** simply failed? Particularly where children are involved or not yet involved? And what about where we find ourselves in an abusive relationship?

This chapter opens with a number of passages from Scripture, which at surface level seem to be at odds with one another. To address these obvious outstanding questions requires us to deal with these seeming paradoxes.

For a coin to be of any value, it needs imprints on both sides of the coin.

Likewise all these passages are the flipside of one another. They need to be held together for the coin, namely the **grace** and **truth** of Jesus Christ, to be the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Important background when it comes to understanding and applying Scripture to divorce, is the position of married women at the time of Jesus.

Put simply, married women were at the mercy of the whims of their husbands. Issuing a “certificate of divorce” got the job done for him and he could move on to the next woman. Jesus’s words in Matthew radically changed this. It was now for the wife to decide whether or not she was going to give her husband grounds for divorce by committing adultery.

And Jesus then compounds the “bad” news for men by declaring that if a husband divorces his wife for any other reason, he then is the cause of his wife committing adultery. And to allow husbands no escape, not only does He make the man guilty of adultery who marries a divorced woman, He fundamentally redefines adultery!

And with this redefinition, Keith says it is difficult to conceive of any man who at some stage of his life did not commit adultery!

Lest there be any doubt about this side of the coin, not only does Jesus shame the men who bring the adulteress to Him for stoning, He uses the Samaritan woman who has been divorced five times and at the time of her encounter with Jesus is shackled up with another man, as his first evangelist amongst the Samaritans. No wonder His disciples were perplexed!

And for good measure, through John He reminds us that he who says he has no sin, is a liar.

The other side of the coin also is clear. Marriage is sacred. Defilement of marriage is an act of unfaithfulness to God. Adultery and divorce are not part of the creation ordinance of marriage. If we defy this creation ordinance, it will break us – both as individuals and as a society.

And so he tells the woman caught in adultery after He has forgiven her, “Go and sin no more”.

Through Paul He reminds us that our bodies are not ours, but are temples of the Holy Spirit. That we were “bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.”

With this in mind we return to the “obvious outstanding questions”, referred to above.

We have no doubt that abuse within a marriage is no different in principle to the act of unfaithfulness which goes along with adultery. The abused spouse physically must immediately withdraw from the marriage, and then seek counsel as to the way ahead. Biblically we are of the view that such a spouse clearly is entitled to obtain a divorce, irrespective of the subsequent behaviour of the abuser.

Whilst we do not want to be prescriptive, from our counselling experience the abused spouse, usually the wife, immediately must enlist the practical and ongoing help of brothers and sisters in Christ so that she is able to make an informed and free choice about whether or not to remain in the marriage where her spouse repents and asks for a second chance. Too often wives either feel trapped or manipulated, especially where there are young children or financial dependence.

Of course this abuse can be far more subtle than physical or verbal abuse - it includes for example a husband/father not fulfilling his leadership responsibilities in a marriage and/or not affirming his wife regularly as a woman whom he loves and desires. Such abuse urgently must be addressed, almost invariably with the help of no nonsense counselling.

The other outstanding questions are more complex and nuanced when it comes to obeying the relevant biblical teaching.

Perhaps a personal anecdote will be of assistance.

A few years back Keith was approached to marry a couple who were both divorced. To compound Keith’s conundrum, he had done the first marriage ceremony for one of the parties, and had been very involved in trying to mediate in the subsequent divorce when it came to the custody of the minor child.

When the couple approached Keith, notwithstanding both of them professing faith in Christ, they were living together.

After much reflection we said that before Keith could make a decision, they had to come and spend a weekend with us.

At the weekend we worked through their previous divorces with the aim of them both gaining insight into their own contributions to their divorces. Predictably, they both initially blamed their previous spouses for the breakdown. Given the combination of our training and experience as psychologist and advocate, that bubble was soon burst!

We then explored to what extent they together had worked through some fundamental issues¹³ which they inevitably would face in their second marriages. Not least of all having to deal with one another's children.

At the end of the weekend we gave them homework to do as a couple and Keith told them he would revert to them with his decision as soon as possible.

There was one outstanding issue which still needed to be dealt with. Their decision to live together, notwithstanding their profession of faith in Christ and His clear teaching in this regard. We made it clear to them that if they loved Christ, and indeed one another, not living together prior to marriage was a small cost to pay. In addition, we were deeply concerned about the example this would set for their young children, and indeed the wider community they were part of.

We also alerted them to the long term practical effect of their disobedience to Christ, in terms of one day being able to give moral guidance to their children when they reached a sexually mature age. If they refused to be obedient to Christ, that would pull the rug from underneath their feet when they tried to teach their children the difference between right and wrong. All their children would do would be to point to their example of following their own passions, hearts and "truth", so then why could they not do the same?

Keith then told them that if they agreed forthwith physically to abstain from living together and told people why they had made that decision, he would marry them. They gave Keith their word that they would comply with his condition.

At the service a few months later, right at the beginning of the wedding service, Keith dealt with their previous marriages and divorces. He informed the

13 In the concluding chapter of this book we deal with two of those issues namely, the need for a common reference point and being able to fight fairly.

congregation that they had repented for their roles in their divorces and had agreed not to live together before marriage.

Particularly for the cynics present, some of whom had been at the previous two weddings, Keith then read the words from 1 John 1 verse 8:

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

He then shared the Good News of Christ that where there is repentance, He forgives and gives us a completely new beginning.

We believe that how we dealt with this couple holds in balance both sides of the coin for the other outstanding questions referred to above.

There must be insight into one's sin in the breakdown of the previous marriage. This includes insight into one's contribution to the breakdown, even if that contribution does not "qualify" as sin.

Of course we often are the last people to see the sin in our conduct, or that our conduct has been sinful, especially when our spouse's sin is "obvious". Here we believe one of the most prevalent sins leading to divorce is where the husband and wife do not comply with their biblically ordained responsibilities. And so even though Eve first eats of the fruit, God goes to Adam to give account for this disobedience, before He goes to Eve. Where husbands either simply seek to please or pacify their wives, not love them by providing gentle, clear and firm spiritual leadership, informed by Scripture, God will hold them responsible for the divorce, irrespective of any disobedience by their wives. Likewise where the wife is not focussed on helping her husband fulfil this responsibility.

One of the reasons for why there needs to be this insight into one's own sin in a divorce, is that marriages are sacred, and we must not enter into another one without an earnest attempt at dealing with potential hurdles going forward.

There are other crucial reasons for this insight.

Divorce is extremely painful and destructive. By definition the Gospel of Christ can turn this suffering into redemptive suffering, as opposed simply to destructive suffering. Gaining insight about oneself from a divorce can be redemptive for future relationships, or indeed for caring and giving guidance to others going through the trauma of contemplating a divorce.

Without insight there can be no confession to the One aggrieved, Jesus Christ.

Without confession there can be no forgiveness. As we have written in the opening chapter, without acknowledging the “bad” news, sin, in our lives, there can be no Good News. To go back to the illustration in that chapter, no amnesty.

No hope of a completely new beginning. A second chance.

And of course it is of no use simply to mouth these things. There must be a decision and resolve to show the love of Christ by obeying Him forthwith. As Jesus more than once says to the disciples in **John 14: “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.**

Hence the need for that couple to stop living together. With sex they physically became one, as we become one with a prostitute, **BEFORE** they make the vow in the presence of God “to leave, cleave and become one flesh” until death parts them.

Although often very hard, it is simple to know what obedience to Christ requires. It is not complicated. We so often make it complicated as a way of rationalising our conduct, to avoid being obedient. Another favourite strategy of ours is to be “practical”. So we argue that it is cost effective to live together before we have made the promise to God and one another.

And the truly Good News is that this newly married couple, like the Samaritan woman at the well, can be used mightily by Jesus Christ, notwithstanding their previous divorces. Just like He used Peter, notwithstanding His threefold betrayal of Christ.

Or as Christ’s grace and wisdom often works, counter intuitively, because of their previous divorces. The choice is theirs. Are they going to use the new marriage to satisfy their desires and wants, or to show people the nature of Christ’s sacrificial love as they serve one another, their children and the community they live in?

Which takes us back to **Bonhoeffer**:

“Marriage is more than your love for each other. It has a higher dignity and power, for it is God’s holy ordinance, through which He wills to perpetuate the human race till

the end of time. In your love you see only your two selves in the world, but in marriage you are a link in the chain of the generations, which God causes to come and to pass away to His glory, and calls into His kingdom. In your love, you see only the heaven of your own happiness, but in marriage you are placed at a post of responsibility towards the world and mankind. Your love is your own private possession, but marriage is more than something personal - it is a status, an office."

The power and Good News of Christ's death on the cross, is that this great calling of marriage once again can become a reality for those who have failed in their previous marriage.

In Revelation 3 Jesus spells out clearly what is needed and what he offers us, all of whom have sinned. Sin is sin, whether it be divorce, abuse of power, exploitation, arrogance, adulterous thoughts. What is required either is a new opening of the door, or a recommitment to opening that door, fundamental to which is repentance:

"Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me. The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on the throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on His throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

Not calling sin sin, so as to affirm people in their choices, as opposed to offend or come across as unloving or judgmental, is to deprive people of this Good News Jesus Christ offers all of us. **The twisted and deceitful strategy of the snake in Genesis 3 is nowhere more prevalent today, than the lies he uses to stop us from calling sin, sin, and so in effect deprive us of the Good News of Jesus Christ.**

CHAPTER 13

A shared reference point

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

Psalm 51 verse 17

If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.

John 13 verse 14

Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into Him who is the head, into Christ.

Ephesians 4 verse 15

If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

1 John 1 verse 6

In Him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our sins, according to the riches of his grace.

Ephesians 1 verse 7

Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?... There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. . . . Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.

Paul's agonised question and freeing answers in his letter to the Romans, chapter 7 verse 24 and chapter 8 verses 1 – 2 and 26

In her practice as a psychologist Ros has always said that a good indicator of whether or not a marriage not only will last, but will be a good marriage, is how the parties fight! If fairly, the prospects are excellent. If unfairly, the converse.

In our marriage preparation and enrichment work, we deal extensively with what fighting fairly and unfairly is¹⁴.

Suffice to say, at the heart of this fairness or unfairness, are our motives in/for the fight, and then our willingness to sacrifice, to die to self, to absorb the blows, even when they are undeserved blows.

Our personal experience after our 43 years of marriage, and our extensive work with other couples, has convinced us that without a common reference point, and ongoing hard work and help to submit to that common reference point, it simply is not possible consistently, and for sustainable periods (here we are talking about long lasting healthy marriages), to fight fairly.

It is our hope that in this book our common reference point would have emerged. Lest it is not as clear as it ought to be, we sum up.

“In the beginning, God, . . . (Genesis 1:1)”. At all times there is only one Complainant. There is only one spectator in a marriage who counts. Jesus Christ.

An immediate consequence of this, is the ongoing recognition in both of us that, like all people, we constantly fall short of Christ’s standard. As a holy and perfect God, His pass mark is a hundred percent.

And so together, when we fail one another, we know that in fact it is Christ who we are failing. Sometimes it is Keith, sometimes it is Roslyn. Sometimes both of us together. And so when we come to an impasse in a fight, we invariably, often reluctantly, are driven to prayer. And in such prayer eventually we both find ourselves confronted by the cross, and the One on the cross.

It is simply impossible then to hold onto our grievance, to defend our position, to fight unfairly, to withhold forgiveness. **After all, Scripture does not tell us to marry the one we love, but to love the one we marry!**

14 If anyone is interested in getting a copy of this, they must contact the authors either at keith@mattd.co.za or rosmatthee@gmail.com

We also cannot see how parents with credibility can pass on a moral code to their children without a shared reference point, rooted outside of themselves and their subjective experiences and opinions.

Once again, “In the beginning, God...” and “Jesus Christ is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.... He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything He might be pre-eminent (Colossians 1)”.

And a reference point not only spoken about, but lived out by the parents. And here we are back to holding together both sides of the coin - sacrifice, insight into one's failings as a parent, truth, grace, consistency, naming sin sin and always sharing the Good News of forgiveness and a new beginning.

This shared reference point outside of ourselves, also is fundamental to all the decisions married couples must make. Prioritising one's time, approach to discipline, the aim of one's work, distinguishing between right and wrong for example when investing, paying just wages, having fair working conditions for employees, resisting the ever present mob mentality, even when very costly.

No doubt these practical considerations were central to St Paul's warning that Christians should not be unequally yoked, whether that be in marriage or any other relationship where one will be called on to make moral decisions. Where a person is ever mindful of Christ's words that we must “not lay up for ourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven”, he will not be a sustainable partner to someone who does not share this reference point.

Having said this, our own personal experience with one of our children, fills us with gratitude that the Lord graciously worked in that marriage even though at the outset there was an unequal yoking. But from our experience, this tells us once again that we must never put Christ's grace and the Holy Spirit into a box, and not that as a rule Paul's words of warning can be discarded.

The world we live in, is full of counterfeits. No more so than when it comes to marriage. The God image in every single person (Genesis 1:27) innately knows that marriage is core to a healthy society.

Satan also knows this. And so employing the same strategy as we see in Genesis 3, he aggressively yet subtly presents counterfeits to what we find in Genesis 2:24.

A clear example of this are the words of a Constitutional Court justice, Albie Sachs¹⁵.

Having affirmed various previous decisions highlighting the importance of marriage as an institution, he continues:

“[64] Though freely entered into by the parties, marriage must be undertaken in a public and formal way and once concluded it must be registered. Formalities for the celebration of the marriage are strictly set out in the Marriage Act. (He then highlights the said formalities, central to which is the State and community’s involvement.) Marriage is thus taken seriously not only by the parties, their families and society, but by the state.

[65] One of the most important invariable consequences of marriage is the reciprocal duty of support. It is an integral part of the marriage contract and has immense value not only to the partners themselves but to their families and also to the broader community....

[67] Marriage also produces certain invariable consequences in relation to children.... [68] The law also attaches a range of other consequences to marriage. (He then highlights the wide-ranging nature of these consequences which touches on almost every area of the law.)....

[69] It should be added that formalization of marriages provides for valuable public documentation. The parties are identified, the dates of celebration and dissolution are stipulated, and all the multifarious and socially important steps which the public administration is required to make in connection with children and forward planning, are facilitated. Furthermore, the commitment of the parties to fulfil their responsibilities is solemnly and publicly undertaken. This is particularly important in imposing clear legal duties on the party who is in the stronger position economically. Marriage stabilizes relationships by protecting the vulnerable partner and introducing equity and security into the relationship.

15 *Minister of Home Affairs and Another v Fourie and Another* 2006 (1) SA 524 (CC) - for a detailed analysis of this and other germane constitutional court judgments, see Keith’s dissertation on the SA Bill Of Rights on his website, www.keithmattthee.com

[70] Marriage law thus goes well beyond its earlier purpose in the common law of legitimizing sexual relations and securing succession of legitimate heirs to family property. And it is much more than a mere piece of paper. As the SALRC Paper comments, the rights and obligations associated with marriage are vast. Besides other important purposes served by marriage, as an institution it was (at the time the SALRC Paper was produced) the only source of socio-economic benefits such as the right to inheritance, medical insurance coverage, adoption, access to wrongful death claims, spousal benefits, bereavement leave, tax advantages and post-divorce rights.

[71] The exclusion of same-sex couples from the benefits and responsibilities of marriage, accordingly, is not a small and tangential inconvenience resulting from a few surviving relics of societal prejudice destined to evaporate like the morning dew... [72]... It follows that, given the centrality attributed to marriage and its consequences in our culture, to deny same-sex couples a choice in this respect is to negate their right to self-definition in a most profound way. [74] The law should not turn its back on any persons requiring legal support in times of family breakdown. It should certainly not do so on a discriminatory basis;”

And so the serpent, in the name of marriage, of giving support where there is family breakdown, of affirming the dignity of all people, and many other noble sounding aims, decrees a definition of marriage in direct conflict with Scripture¹⁶. And again we hear satan whisper, as he did in Genesis 3: “Did God really say ... :?”

And as an encouragement for Eve, and us, to disobey God, satan continues: “You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” And so we usurp the role of God by deciding what is good and evil, in the process creating a god in our own image, in “our truth”.

The prophet Isaiah some 2 700 years ago speaks powerfully and directly to these words of Sachs J: “Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil.” (Isaiah 5:20)

16 DE v RH CCT 182/14. In this judgment, to rationalize making adultery lawful, there is no such support of marriage - for a detailed analysis of this judgment see Keith's research referred to in footnote 15.

And again in Isaiah 3:9 the prophet says: “They proclaim their sin like Sodom: they do not hide it. Woe to them! For they have brought evil upon themselves.”

We are back to, “And in the beginning, God....”

Jesus’s words as He looked down at Jerusalem and wept are apposite:

“And when He drew near and saw the city, He wept over it, saying, ‘Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation’¹⁷.”

Every day we spent writing this book 450–500 unborn babies in South Africa, were intentionally killed in effect with the blessing of the Constitutional Court, and the silence of much of the church. (Since the abortion act was put into effect in 1998, some 2 2000 000 unborn babies intentionally have been killed by doctors and nurses at the behest of their often traumatised moms¹⁸.)

Arguably these are the two main assaults by satan on “In the beginning, God” (the Author of life) - on the most vulnerable of all human life, and thus life itself, and on the foundational institution created and designed by God for society, marriage.

This world indeed is not our home. But while we are here Christ calls on us in our marriages **and everything else about us**, sacrificially to show this world “both sides of the coin”, His love/grace **AND** His truth.

And that without confessing the “bad” news in our lives, our sin, there cannot be the Good News of His love, His grace, His forgiveness, His promise of new beginnings, of life in all its fullness. Indeed, His promise of eternal life in His presence, **starting today**.

¹⁷ Josephus graphically describes the horrors in 70 AD when the Romans, some 37 years of these words of Jesus, massacred the Jews in Jerusalem – see “Sources recommended”

¹⁸ See footnotes 3 and 17 of *The Emperor Has No Clothing*, also available on Keith’s website www.keithmatthee.com

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In this book Keith and Roslyn write: “One of the great lies today, sadly also within parts of the church, is that love means affirming people, no matter what life choice they make. And to offend someone is unpardonable. And so to call sin, sin, is not only unloving and judgmental, it is hateful.

The effect of this is that we deprive people of the Good News of amnesty. For if there is no ‘bad’ news, sin, to be repented of, there can be no forgiveness of that sin. So under the guise of being ‘loving’ and caring, in effect we take away the Good News of Jesus Christ, of grace, forgiveness, of new beginnings, of like Peter 2000 years ago, not only being forgiven and restored by Jesus for his threefold betrayal of Jesus, but then being greatly used by Jesus as the rock upon which His church would be built. . . .

And satan replaces this Good News by denying that there is ‘bad’ news, and in the name of ‘love’ providing so called ‘safe’ spaces, trauma counselling, medication, and a litany of rationalisations, central to which is a mentality of victimhood, self-pity and often ‘Christophobia’.

Using some of their experiences as man, woman and married couple, they focus on the nature of Christ’s love and holiness and the creation ordinances He has put in place, and satan’s strategy to rob people of accepting the offer of Christ’s love, grace and life in all its abundance. They argue that central to countering satan’s attack is to be rooted in Scripture and prayer and to be ever mindful of the words of the prophet Jeremiah some 2600 years ago: “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick.”

One Man, One Woman!

KEITH & ROSLYN MATTHEE

www.keithmatthee.com