



# MARRIAGE

A JOURNEY TO GOD'S KINGDOM?  
A PATH TO HEAVEN ?

by

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# BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS



- Marriage is about building Relationships

It's about building our Relationship with our Spouse  
so that we may assist each other to enter Heaven

It's about building our Relationship with God that  
will lead us to Heaven



By learning  
how to love  
each other  
unconditionally  
we learn how to  
love God in a  
more perfect  
way

VI marriage is  
a journey

to heaven...

"And so marriage is a road:  
it starts out from the earth and ends in heaven."

*Aimilianos of Simonopetra*



Marriage  
does not end in this lifetime

The perfecting  
that happens in marriage  
prepares us to live eternally with God

The destination of the marriage journey  
is heaven

The perfecting  
that happens in marriage  
is what we call...  
salvation



If we learn how to love each other despite our differences, difficulties and disagreements we will attain to the perfect love of God.

We cannot claim to love God unless we learn to love our spouse

"Marriage is a sacrament because in it and through it the kingdom of God becomes a living experience."

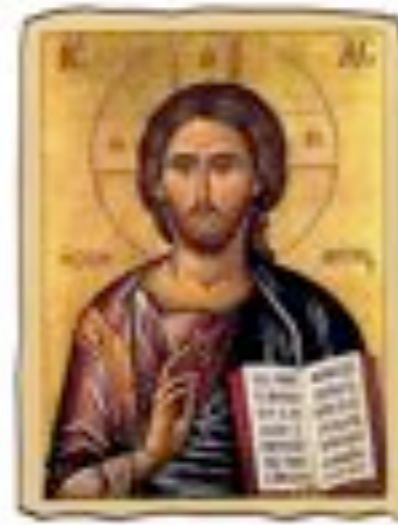
John Meyendorff - Marriage: An Orthodox Perspective



VII marriage is a journey

to salvation...

"Make [God's] love your aim." 1 Corinthians 14:12



It's through...

- the daily activities of married life
- the exciting and monotonous times
- the daily journey toward oneness with each other
- the learning how to love through the differences, difficulties and disagreements
- the learning to love each other with God's love

that you will experience the 'happily ever after' that God desires for each of us.



"If we love one another, God abides in us,  
and His love is perfected in us..."  
1 John 4:12



**V** marriage is  
a journey

**of being  
transformed...**

## That the two may become One

### Ingredients for a successful Marriage

- Humility
- Patience
- Perseverance
- Generosity
- Caring
- Selflessness
- Forgiveness

**These virtues  
lead to  
Oneness**

**As...**

- you journey together...
- you get to know each other...
- you build oneness...
- you learn to love through the daily challenges of married life...



**God's love in your marriage changes you**



- God's love in your marriage makes you perfect—perfectly selfless and caring toward your spouse.
- This is the Sacrament of Marriage.



**Marriage has its dangers, as well**

**dangers along the way...**



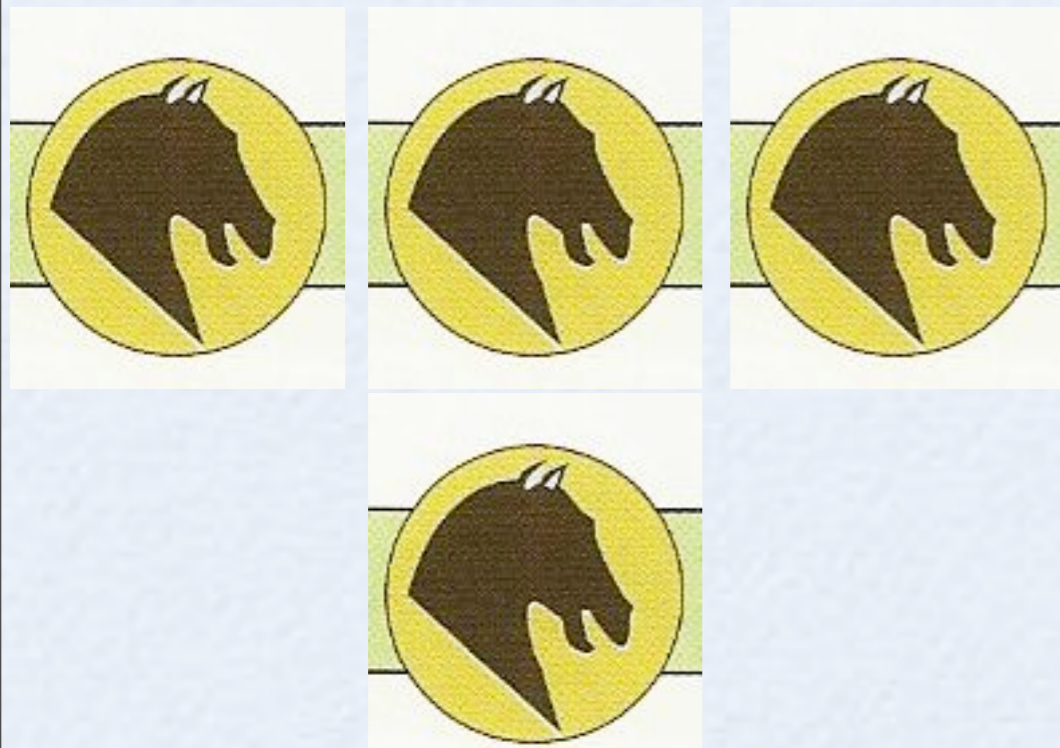
Differences, difficulties and disagreements lead to conflict. If the couple responds constructively these will lead to intimacy, oneness and salvation





## The Two Ways

1. Path to Oneness and the bliss of Marriage
2. Path to the Battlefield of the Four Horsemen



## B. the slippery slope

...but along the way, there will be a fork in the road  
...and you will have a choice



**Let's take a closer look at this second path.**

We are going to look at some of Dr. John Gottman's\* work. In particular, we are going to look at what he calls:

- "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse," is a reference from the Book of Revelation

\* John Gottman is a well-known marital researcher



In the Book of Revelation Saint John the Theologian uses the image of The Four Horsemen to signal the beginning of the end of time:



“...a white horse  
...its rider had a bow,  
and a crown was given to him,  
and he went out  
conquering and to conquer  
...and out came another horse,  
bright red;  
its rider was permitted  
to take peace from the earth,  
so that men should slay one another;  
...and I saw,  
and behold, a black horse,  
and its rider  
had a balance in his hand;  
...I saw,  
and behold, a pale horse,  
and its rider's name was Death,  
and Hades followed him.”

Revelation 6:2-8

The Four Horsemen-Monastery of Dionysiou, Mount Athos



1. Criticism
2. Contempt
3. Stonewalling
4. Defensiveness

When these horsemen appear in your marriage they signal the beginning of the end, unless you take action against them

Dr. John Gottman uses this image of The Four Horsemen as a sign that a marriage is moving toward meltdown and divorce.

The Four Horsemen are:



- 1 criticism
- 2 contempt
- 4 stonewalling
- 3 defensiveness







O Lord our God, through Your plan of salvation,  
You have declared and confirmed marriage to be  
honorable by Your presence in Cana of Galilee.

Do You Yourself now, O Lord, preserve in peace and  
concord Your servants, whom You have willed to be  
joined together in marriage by Your blessing.

Reveal their marriage to be honorable.

Preserve their conjugal life in purity.

Bless their married life to be without any stain  
of sin, and to remain in faithful chastity.

Make them worthy, O Lord, to reach a ripe old age  
together and to keep Your commandments with a  
pure heart.

Service of the Crowning

## **B. dangerous curves ahead...**

Anyone not  
attentive to  
his or her  
marriage  
can end up  
slip-sliding down



this path.  
How can we  
make this  
claim? Well...  
consider the  
following statistics.

## We live in a culture of divorce...

40%	of all marriages end in divorce
50%	of all couples report being unhappy
50%	of all divorces occur during the first seven years
51%	of all couples will not see their 25th anniversary
40%	of all children will grow up without one biological parent in the home

## What these statistics imply...



- Many couples who begin their marriage hoping to journey on the right track end up sliding down this slippery slope.
- It's easy for couples to find themselves on this wrong path.
- So...preparing for marriage means learning how to spot the dangers that indicate you are going down the wrong path in marriage.
- You don't want to become one of those statistics!





O God, our God, who were present in Cana of Galilee and who blessed marriage there, bless also these Your servants who, by Your providence, have now been united in the community of marriage.

Bless them as they go in and out of their home, and fill their life with everything that is good.

Prayer at the removal of the Crowns,  
Service of the Crowning

**If...** couples make the wrong choices when they get to that fork in the road...**the First Horseman** appears on the slippery slope.



# II

## First Horseman

1st



Horseman

:

criticism

**There are two types of criticism:**

- constructive criticism
- destructive criticism

...which means that not all criticism is bad

### **A. Constructive Criticism**



- focuses on the issue or the problem

Following are two examples:

Bill & Maria two months after the honeymoon:



## Bill's Dirty Socks

Bill and Maria are getting comfortable with each other, and they're starting to fall into their old habits, which they had before their marriage.

Bill starts leaving his socks lying on the floor.

Maria starts picking them up—like she thinks a good wife should; but after the fifth or so time, it starts getting old. She needs to do something more than simply picking up after him. So she says, "Bill, let's talk...I like a clean bedroom. Would you mind picking up your dirty socks?"

Bill, now realizing that it bothers her, says, "Sorry, I didn't realize I did that. I'll pick them up. I promise to do better."

And...he does do better.

**Constructive criticism addresses the issue**

one month later:



## María & Greek Time

María seems to always be on Greek time.\*

Bill likes to be on time. At first he is patient, but after María is late several times, he decides to address the issue. He says, "María, let's talk...When you're late, that really bothers me. It's important to me that we are on time. I'd really appreciate it if you'd try and be on time."

And María, in response says, "I'm sorry, I'll try to do better."

And...she does do better.



For those who might not know, Greek time is about 30 minutes late.



**In both instances Bill and Maria use constructive criticism which...**

- focuses on the issue, not the person...
  - Bill's dirty socks
  - Maria's tardiness

1st



Horseman

:

criticism

## B. Destructive Criticism...



- focuses on the person
- loses sight of the issue
- is a direct attack on the person

## B. Destructive Criticism...

Here's what it typically includes...

- insults
- mild sarcasm
- name calling
- impatience



Here is what happens when Bill and Maria choose destructive criticism. The First Horseman enters the relationship.



## Bill's Socks

one month later:

Bill and Maria have their morning routine. He gets up early and makes the coffee while she showers. Then they share a quiet cup of coffee together before they head off on their day.

Well, this morning, as Maria steps out of the shower, she sees Bill's dirty socks again on the floor.

"Bill!" she yells, impatiently, "You promised to pick up after yourself!"

C'mon, you can't be that dense. [insult]

What's so hard about picking up your smelly, dirty socks?" [sarcasm]

1st



Horseman

:

criticism

## **B. Destructive Criticism...**

**Bad habits develop...**

and we're not just talking about dirty socks.

**We are talking about a pattern of behavior  
which applies destructive criticism on a  
frequent basis with ultimate consequences**



## B. Destructive Criticism...

### Bill's contribution to destruction



### Maria & Greek Time

Maria is upstairs, still getting ready for a 7:30 PM movie. It is 7:20 PM, and it takes 20 minutes to get to the theater.

Bill is stewing as he waits.

Maria makes her way down the stairs as if nothing is wrong.

Bill says, "Uh, I notice that you have a watch on. Have you ever thought about looking at it once in a while?" [sarcasm]

"You've made us late again!" [insult, impatience]

They argue, and stay mad. Imagine how the date goes.

They don't talk about it anymore.

Bad habits develop.

## **B. Destructive Criticism...**

### **We're not just talking about...**

how couples handle dirty socks and tardiness! We're talking about choices—how couples have a choice about how they address their differences and difficulties... either constructively, or destructively.

### **We could easily be talking about other things like...**

- joint or separate checking accounts
- replacing the toilet paper roll
- getting/forgetting milk from the store

## B. Destructive Criticism... a clear choice

## Opportunities to Disagree

- calling when you're going to be late
- opening another cereal box when two others are already open
- in-laws:  
"Do we have to spend every Sunday at your parents' home?"
- your car's gas tank:  
"Should we fill it when the needle is on empty or before?"
- your sex-life:  
"Should we or shouldn't we include some snuggle time?"
- the list is endless...



If couples choose to handle these issues constructively, intimacy grows

If couples choose to use destructive criticism, these kinds of issues linger and remain unresolved...

and couples slide down the slippery slope toward the...

# III

## Second Horseman

2nd



Horseman

:

contempt

What is Contempt and ...

**What does contempt sound like?**

**It's criticism ratcheted up several notches!**

- biting insults
- threats
- shouting
- liberal amounts of hateful profanity
- hurtful sarcasm
- lots of impatience and destructive criticism

**2nd**



**Horseman**

**:**

**contempt**

## **Like criticism, contempt is toxic! Why?**

- It gets personal!
- It is a deliberate, hurtful attack on the other person and the oneness you desire to build.
- It hurts!

**2nd**



**Horseman**

**:**

**contempt**

- Contempt is filled with...
  - anger
  - resentment
  - revenge
  - meanness

# contempt



Let's look at what happens when contempt enters the relationship

Bill & Maria

six months later...

Note: This is 11 months into Bill and Maria's marriage, and look what's happened.

Maria comes home from work. Murphy's Law is in effect all day for her. Everything that can go wrong did go wrong.

Bill is also exhausted, sitting in the Lazyboy, channel surfing and decompressing.

Maria passes him with barely a glance. Bill grunts as Maria heads to the bedroom to change. And guess what she finds on the floor? She grabs the dirty socks, furious, and heads back to Bill in the TV room. She stands in front of their HD TV, waving the socks and says...

"Bill, you are such a #@! Jerk! [profanity, name-calling]"

"I'm done picking up after you!" [threats]"

"You're so selfish!" [insult, contempt]"

Then she throws the socks at Bill and leaves.

They don't talk the whole night and most of the next day.



## Maria & Greek Time continued...

Maria's car needs some work, so Bill agrees to let Maria use his car, as long as she picks him up after work on time. She agrees and promises to be on time.

Can anyone guess what's going to happen?

It's 5 o'clock, and Maria has not arrived. She arrives at 5:30 pm. Bill has been standing out in the rain without an umbrella, stewing and becoming increasingly upset.

Maria pulls up and, before she even has a chance to say hi, he lays into her.

"Where the !@# have you been? You can be so !@# selfish!"  
(profanity, insult)

"Sometimes I think we'd be better off divorced!" (threat)

"I'm so sick and tired of you always..."

Before he has a chance to finish his attack, she drives off.

Bill ends up taking a cab home.

They don't speak for days!





- Contempt is filled with...
  - anger
  - resentment
  - revenge
  - meanness

### **They keep sliding down the slope...**

- Notice how quickly a couple can slide into contempt.
- If enough criticism and contempt enter into a couple's exchanges,  
**The Third Horseman** soon arrives...





**the slippery slope**

# IV Third Horseman

3rd  Horseman : defensiveness

## Defensiveness...

is your effort to protect yourself from an attack and from being hurt.



Greek hoplites with shields

3rd



Horseman

:

defensiveness

## Defensiveness...

builds up a wall between yourself and your partner in order to protect yourself.



## Defensiveness...

blocks connection and undermines oneness.



Here is what defensiveness sounds like eighteen months after the wedding...

María: "You're such a pathetic slob!"

Bill reacts: "Yeah, and you're Ms. Perfect!"

Bill: "You can never be on time!"

María: "I'm not always late."

Bill: "And it's not my fault."

María: "Yes it is! You started it!"

Bill: "Yeah, yeah, it's always my fault!"

3rd



Horseman

:

defensiveness

People become defensive ...

- when they feel attacked.
- to protect themselves from more hurtful attacks.
- and point fingers of blame to deflect their partner's criticisms and contempt.

After enough criticism, contempt and defensiveness enter a couple's arguments, **the Fourth Horseman** appears...

# V Fourth Horseman

4th  Horseman : stonewalling

**Stonewalling:** when a person shuts down, shuts up, tunes out, and turns away from the other...







### Why do spouses stonewall?

- They're worn down and tired of arguing about the same things in the same hurtful way.

- They're flooded with negativity, like anger, resentment, rage, hurt and shame.
- They're sick of being attacked and don't know how to respond—or don't want to respond anymore—for fear of what they might say or do. So...they shut up, shut down, tune out, and turn away from one another.



- Men and women have just as many feelings.
- In general, women are different from men in the way they experience emotions and in their ability to manage them effectively.
- Generally, men have more difficulty managing their emotions than women.

4th



Horseman

: stonewalling



Bill & Maria

sliding out of control...

24 months into their marriage, Bill is shutting down more regularly.

In response, Maria is becoming more resentful and angry. Bill stonewalls even more.

At this point, they're not able to effectively talk to each other about practically anything, let alone what they're really struggling with.

They are are sliding down...out of control .



By the way, men are more likely to stonewall than women.

## Emotions: The Truth

**While some people presume that men do not have as many feelings as women, in fact, they do. Women are, typically raised from a young age to express and share their emotions. Men are, typically, not supported to learn how to express a full range of emotions, and more easily become overwhelmed with what they are feeling.**



If these Four Horsemen hang around long enough, guess what happens?

- instead of oneness, two different worlds emerge...



***"For this very reason make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love."***

**2Pet. 1:5-7**



Many couples who get caught on this slippery slope...

- begin as soul-mates
- turn into roommates
- end up feeling like cell-mates



## Bill & Maria

continued...

See how quickly, within two years of their wedding, Bill and Maria found themselves at the bottom of the slippery slope.

As Bill continues to stonewall, eventually Maria is going to give up.

When that happens, the couple disconnects, making it increasingly difficult to come back together again.

Intimacy has been lost.

Trust is gone.

Friendship is lost.

Hurt, resentment and anger have built up and are filling their relationship.

The marriage has melted down, and divorce is imminent.

It is at this time that couples are susceptible to infidelity.

As the marriage melts down, the relationships at work seem more attractive.

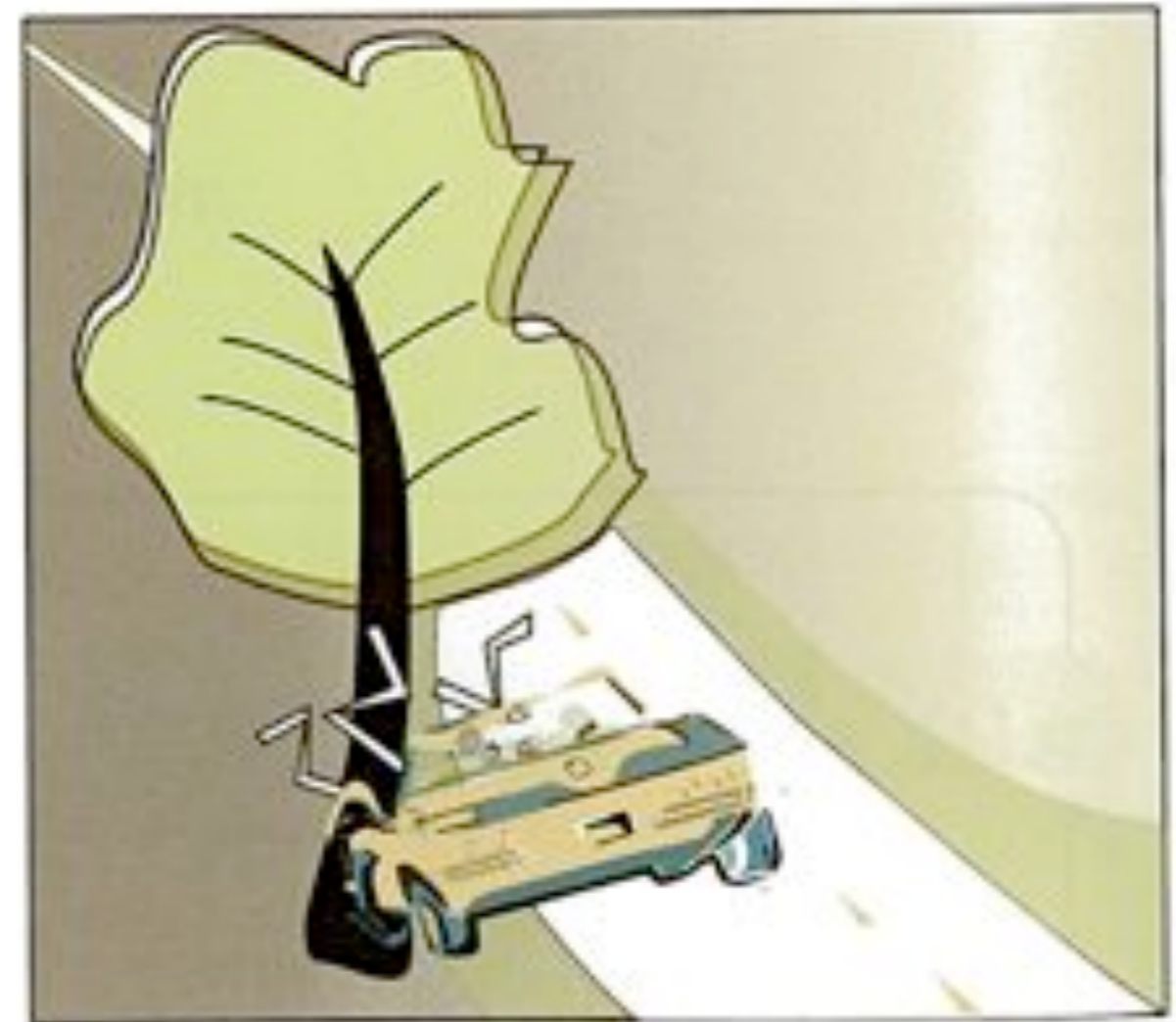
## **Infidelity begins in the heart . . .**

- 1. When it becomes easier to talk with someone of the opposite sex at the office than your spouse you are heading for infidelity.**
- 2. Individuals are more likely to engage in an emotional affair long before they have a physical affair.**
- 3. If you allow this emotional or physical relationship to develop it will rob your marriage of emotional energy and make it more difficult to grow closer to your spouse.**

If marriage is like a road trip, then Bill and Maria are a wreck on the side of the road.

**So...please remember this!**

- In this divorce society, all marriages are vulnerable.
- Bill and Maria ended up—in a very short time—at the bottom of that slippery slope.
- They had a lot of choices along the way, but were not attentive to the warning signs.
- Marriage is a journey of oneness, which, if you choose, leads toward intimacy and happiness.
- But if you choose the wrong path, you will end up at the bottom of that slippery slope.







# Beware of the Horsemen



**So...when you see one of the Horsemen appear in your marriage, attend to your spouse and marriage on your journey together.**

- Make your spouse a top priority.
- Make oneness a top priority.
- Guard against **the Four Horsemen**.
- Beware of the slippery slope...so you don't end up a statistic. 30% 40% 50% 60% ?% ?%



1. Criticism
2. Contempt
3. Stonewalling
4. Defensiveness

**When these horsemen appear in your marriage they signal the beginning of the end, unless you take action against them**

**May God be with  
you!**

The End!