

## **PREMARITAL COUNSELLING**

### **SESSION ONE**

#### **PURPOSE AND PLAN OF MARRIAGE**

One of the basic ground rules for these counselling sessions is confidentiality. There is nothing that cannot be discussed in any of the sessions. Do not hesitate to ask any questions. I will also take the same privilege of asking pertinent questions.

#### **A. A Realistic Look at Marriage**

Canadian and American statistics on marriage are basically the same. Fifty percent of first time marriages end in divorce within the first five years. The percentage of second time marriages increase to 72 percent, while third time marriages increase to 83 percent. Seventy five percent of common-law marriages break apart within their first five years. The consequence has been a growth of lone-parent families, which has increased to 85 percent which are mother led. These families are four times more likely to be living in poverty. About one in four children do not live at home with their biological parents.

## B. Defining Biblical Marriage

Balswick characterizes biblical marriage as a faithful bond between one man and one woman with four basic features: *covenant* (an exclusive commitment of permanence), a relationship of *grace* (adaptability), a pattern of *empowering* based on authority framed by mutual submissiveness, and a pattern of *intimacy* characterized by communication, sharing and problem solving.

Balswick

*"The Family: A Christian Perspective on the Contemporary Home"*

Here are some other definitions of marriage:

"The Christian view of marriage is **NOT** that it is primarily or essentially a binding legal and social contract. The Christian understands marriage as a covenant made under God and in the presence of fellow members of the Christian family. Such a pledge endures, not because of the force of law or the fear of its sanctions, but because an unconditional covenant has been made. A covenant more solemn, more binding, more permanent than any legal contract."

David Augsburger

*"Caring Enough to Confront"*

*"Marriage resembles a pair of shears -- so joined so that they cannot be separated; often moving in opposite directions, yet always punishing anyone who comes between them."*

Dr. Norman Wright a licensed marriage and family counsellor in private practice has formulated the following definition:

*"A Christian marriage is a total commitment of two people to the person of Jesus Christ and to one another. It is a commitment in which there is no holding back of anything. Marriage is a pledge of mutual fidelity; it is a partnership of mutual subordination. Marriage is a refining process that God will use to have us develop into a man or woman He wants us to become."*

## C. Defining Love

There is no doubt that our world has lost the true meaning of love. Love has been defiled by those with an unregenerate mind and unconverted heart. Since love is one of the most important building blocks in foundation of any marriage, it must be understood or a successful relationship is impossible.

Couples have many different definitions of love. It is important to honestly ask yourself why do you believe you are in love with each other?

*"A person is in love with another individual when meeting the emotional needs of that person becomes an emotional need of his or her own life."*

*"Real love means an unconditional commitment to an imperfect person."*

\*\*\* Dr. Harry Ironside told of a young husband who came to him wondering if he loved his wife so much that it interfered with his love for God. Wise old Dr. Ironside asked, "Young man, do you love her enough to die for her? After hesitating for a moment he replied, "No, I guess not." The aged counsellor replied, "Your problem is, you don't love her enough."

There are several words used to describe the English word "*love*."

**1. Agape** - is the highest, noblest form of love which sees something infinitely precious in its object (John 3:16). It is self-giving without looking for something in return. It's the kind of love that endures even when the person is unlovable.

**2. Phileo** - is seen as intimate or full of tender affection (John 11:3,36). A brotherly --friendship --companionship-- type of love. It describes mutual attraction, cooperation, and communication between two individuals.

**3. Storge** - is the type that would describe the love of a mother for her baby. A storgic relationship usually develops over a long period of time, and is solid and more resistant to change than erotic love. Trust, caring, and compassion are high components while selfishness is low.

### C. Defining Love (Contd.)

**4. Pragma** - is the kind of relationship that works because the partner's personal requirements, personalities, backgrounds, likes, and dislikes are compatible. If it is seen as mutually benefiting both partners, they believe they are in love

**5. Ludis** - is the kind that sees love as a gain, something to pursue. It is not a long-term relationship, but rather one based upon an immediate gratification to win their partners affection. Ludis love lasts as long as the couple has fun and finds the relationship mutually satisfying. It is like a game that looks for immediate gratification and enjoyment.

**6. Manic** - a manic lover is obsessed over the relationship with the other person. This relationship swings wildly between highs and lows. It is fuelled by a low self concept which has an insatiable need for attention.

**7. Eros** - is the sensuous, selfish and sexual love based on the pursuit of beauty and pleasure that demands all but offers little. It can be described as "What can I get?"

First Corinthians chapter 13 has been considered to be the greatest definition that has ever been written on the word "love." You cannot fall in and out of true biblical love - agape love. Love is not a commodity that can be bartered for, or bought or sold, nor can it be forced upon or from someone. It must be voluntary, unconditionally offered.

Eric Fromm has beautifully said:

*"Love means to commit oneself with guarantee, to give oneself completely in hope that our love will produce love in the loved person."*

## C. Defining Love (Contd.)

### Scriptural References of Love

1. Love God First	Matthew 22:37-39
2. Love Your Enemies	Luke 6:27-35
3. Love One Another	John 13:34
4. Love is the Fulfilment of the Law	Romans 13:8-10
5. Love Edifies	I Corinthians 13:1
6. Serve Through Love	Galatians 5:13
7. Bear One Another in Love	Ephesians 4:2
8. Husbands Love as Christ Loved	Ephesians 5:25
9. Love Covers a Multitude of Sins	I Peter 4:8
10. Love is Laying Down Your Life	I John 3:16-18
11. Love Bears One Another's Burdens	Galatians 6:2
11. Love is the More Excellent Way	I Corinthians 13

Love is an act of faith, and whoever is of little faith is of little love. When love demands, pain begins.

## D. The Marriage Union

The lifetime union of two lives constitutes what the scriptures describe as marriage (Matthew 19:1-10).

The Scriptures make 3 distinct statements about marriage.

**1. Marriage is *desired* by God** (Genesis 2:18). Notice that God took the initiative to expose the emotional and physical need within Adam. Marriage is desired by God for the purpose of meeting human needs. Singleness is an exception for a few people (Matthew 19:12).

Marriage is desired by God, not only for human pleasure, but also for human partnership and human parenthood (Gen 1:28). This is a privilege which is denied to angelic beings (Mark 12:25; Matthew 22:30).

**2. Marriage is *determined* by God** (Genesis 2:21,22). We find here love's preparation. Adam's action should teach us to trust God for our life long mate. The "right" mate will soon become apparent with an increasing conviction of love. You will grow in an affinity toward one another as St. Augustine so beautifully wrote:

**D. The Marriage Union (Contd.)**

"If God meant man to rule over a woman, He would have taken her from Adam's head. Had He designed her to be his slave, He would have taken her from his feet. But God took woman out of man's side, for He made her to be a help meet and an equal to him."

The wedding day holds more than love's preparation and revelation. It is love's consummation (Genesis 2:24). The high standard of a God-ordained marriage should be pondered seriously and solemnly. The Bible teaches marriage to be one of monogamy and fidelity.

**3. Marriage is *defended* by God.** There is nothing good that the devil does not attack, and marriage is no exception. The greatest weapon he uses today is our minds in an attempt to display our incompatibility. Every potential threat to marital harmony can be defeated through Jesus Christ.

**Assignment #1**

- 1. Write down 12-15 reasons why you want to marry this person.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

- 2. What dreams do you have for your upcoming marriage?

---

---

---

---

---