

EAST
Singapore

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CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE
Lesson 4
Shaky Foundations for Marriage

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. A woman came into my office and wanted me to marry her to a man I would call a social misfit. The woman claimed to be a Christian, but was involved with him sexually and was determined to marry the man. They came to me for premarital counseling and the man gave the right answers (like he had been coached) as to his faith in Christ, but his life did not indicate he was a Christian. In fact, I was not sure the woman was a Christian. I tried to talk them out of marriage, but they insisted, and her folks who were members of my church also encouraged the marriage, although they had doubts. I agreed to marry them on the basis of their professions of faith. When they left my office, I put my head down on my desk and cried because I knew this marriage was doomed to failure before it even got started. Two years later, this marriage ended in a bloody divorce. Why? There was a totally wrong foundation for this marriage.
- B. Some of these messages on Christian marriage are for men and women who are not yet married, but desire a Christian ethic for marriage. A true Christian wants to do God's will and wants his life to come into conformity to Christ.
- C. If you find yourself uninterested in these messages or laughing inside at what is being taught, you probably are not a Christian at all.
- D. Next to one's decision to receive Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Savior, the next greatest decision a person will ever face is the choice of a husband or wife.
- E. Some marriages are made in heaven, but most are made on earth. This is another way of saying that some marriages are in God's directive will, but most are in the permissive will. If you want a marriage contracted in heaven, it can be so—but only on God's terms. If you are a Christian, God is far more concerned about the one you are to marry than you are. Therefore, you ought to listen to God's counsel on the subject so as to avoid wrong foundations for Christian marriage. Abraham Lincoln once said, "Love is blind, but marriage is a great eye opener!"

II. DO NOT AS A CHRISTIAN MARRY A NON-CHRISTIAN

A. What is a Christian?

- 1. A Christian is one who has personally trusted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and knows with certainty he is a Christian. A Christian perseveres in the faith and gives evidence with his life that Christ lives in him. The true Christian makes the Bible his whole guide for Christian living. This definition eliminates rank unbelievers, Christian sympathizers, churchmen and mere professing Christians.

2. It is important to test a relationship for a time to make sure both partners are dedicated to Christ. A couple in my church who knew each other for five months took my marriage counseling, read books, talked to friends, sought the wisdom of the elders and decided to get married. Outwardly, their marriage for the first year seemed to be wonderful. The second year was very shaky. The third year the man walked out, had an affair, and abandoned his wife and child. He did this in spite of the best counsel we could get for him. Then he denounced the faith. He not only turned from Christ, but he became an adversary of Christ. What is my point? Test your potential mate as much as possible for spiritual reality before you marry.
- B. The Bible commands a believer to marry another believer.**
1. *"Do not intermarry with them. Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons, for they will turn your sons away from following me to serve other gods, and the Lord's anger will burn against you and will quickly destroy you." "A woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but he must belong to the Lord."* (Deut. 7:3-4; 1 Cor. 7:39).
 2. The major verse is 2 Cor. 6:14 which says, *"Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever?"* Now this verse applies to other things besides marriage, but marriage is certainly one of the most important relationships to which it applies.
 3. God strictly forbids a spiritually mixed marriage of a Christian with a non-Christian. The Bible says, *"Do two walk together unless they have agreed to do so?"* (Amos 3:3).
- C. Dangers of a spiritually mixed marriage.**
1. Apart from the fact God commands against it, the possibility a spiritually mixed marriage will be successful is very slim. Therefore, it is wrong for a pastor to marry an unbeliever and a believer because God will not bless this relationship.
 2. The agony, suffering and misery of a spiritually mixed marriage are beyond description.
- D. A spiritually mixed marriage makes a barrier.**
1. To marry an unbeliever is to start with an automatic barrier in that marriage. A Christian has two natures in him, a sin nature which seeks to serve self and a new nature which seeks to please God. The new nature despises sin. The non-Christian has only one nature which is the sin nature. He or she may be moral, cultured and refined, but apart from Christ he or she does not have a nature which seeks to please God and desires to have Christ as master of the life.
 2. When a two-natured person marries a one-natured person, the only basis for fellowship is the old nature. A spiritually mixed marriage joins two people who can never really belong to each other. They can be married legally and morally, but not spiritually, and a high wall will separate the

- two. The marriage will not be all God intended marriage to be with a divided love.
3. It is unfair and harmful for the unbelieving and believing partner to start a marriage with an almost insurmountable wall between them. The believer understands this; the unbeliever does not, so it is the believer's responsibilities to stop it before it gets started.
 4. William McRae in the pamphlet "Marks of a Christian Marriage" says this:

The Hebrew word translated "flesh" (Gen. 2:24) may mean "person." The ultimate goal of a Christian marriage is that two people become one person. Each person, body, soul and spirit is to be joined to the other that they become one in these areas. In a total marriage, there is the union of two bodies. There is also the union of two souls with their emotion, intellectual and social capacity. Primarily; however, there is the union of two spirits—our capacity to know God. But, you see, here is exactly the problem. An unbeliever has a spirit but his spirit is dead! He does not know God. He is without spiritual life. It is dead until it is quickened in the work of regeneration by God the Holy Spirit (Eph. 2:1-2). Therefore, it is absolutely impossible for a believer and an unbeliever to attain the divine goal of a marriage. They can never be one in spirit and this is the most basic area of their relationship. There will never be true intimacy as long as one is a believer and one is an unbeliever.

- F. A spiritually mixed marriage will nullify God's design for the Christian home.
 1. God's purpose for saving a person is that that person may glorify God. When a Christian decides to take his romance out of the control of God, he is settling for life on a lower level.
 2. God desires Christian homes should glorify him. When a husband and wife together belong to Jesus Christ and live in obedience and dependence upon him, vital witness is given to the world.

III. SHAKY FOUNDATIONS FOR MARRIAGE

- A. Do not marry too young.
 1. Generally speaking (there are a few exceptions) teenage marriages are not successful. If the girl is 18 or 19 and the man is older, this presents less problems, but even then, a young woman has much growing up to do.
 2. There are three very good reasons why teenage marriages should be avoided:
 - a. Often the marriage is based on physical attraction and not true love and respect.
 - b. Usually neither partner will get proper schooling.
 - c. The husband will probably not get a good job to support his family.
 3. A boy in his teens is not prepared for marriage. He is not mature enough. A man must take the initiative in making marriage work, and a teenage boy does not have the maturity to do this.

4. A teenage girl may have a little more maturity than a guy may, but not much. When a girl becomes a woman, she has a different philosophy of life. Things she thought were so important as a teenager (looks, big man on campus, macho) are not worth two *cents* in making a successful marriage. A girl who thinks she has found the perfect mate and marries in her mid-teens, say at 16 or 17 will often laugh at her husband when she is 21 or 22.
 5. General ages for a marriage might be 20-28 for women and 22-30 for men. This of course, is changing in our society as we have more career minded women.
- B. Do not marry to fulfill sex drives
1. The sex drive is the very strongest in people between the ages of 16-24. The sex drive is very strong and this is natural, or humans would not want to reproduce the human race. However, if a person can ride out the waves of libido in the teens and early twenties, he or she is in a much better position to make more mature judgments about marriage.
 2. To find a natural outlet for sexual drives is a legitimate motivation for marriage, but it is not the prime consideration.
 3. David Augsburger in his book *Cherishable Love and Marriage* says,

Why marry? To regulate and legitimize sexual activities? Sex within the security and open intimacy of marriage, does find the perfect context for genuinely free love. Then the person experiencing the I-accept-you-completely-as-you-are-and-as-you-will-be kind of love can afford to express himself/herself without any inhibiting fear or rejection. But, sex is neither the sole nor the central reason for marriage, fascinating and fulfilling as it can be.

4. Do not lose perspective on sex. Be careful not to magnify sex out of proportion. Sex is not love. It is simply one of the many manifestations of love. When sex is exalted too highly, other considerations such as spiritual compatibility, mental compatibility, cultural and racial compatibility and mutual interests are pushed into the background.
 5. Unsaved society says sex is the ultimate experience. This is a lie. It is a wonderful experience for two married people, but the ultimate experience is loving and serving Jesus Christ.
- C. Do not marry for sexual respectability
1. Perhaps a person has fallen into sexual sin before marriage, but really does not love the person enough to spend a lifetime with him or her. However, the person goes into marriage for sexual respectability or fear of facing another person (usually family) about his or her past. It would all be too embarrassing not to marry. It is much easier to break off a romance than a marriage.
 2. If a girl or woman is pregnant before marriage, that situation may or may not be a reason to marry. Sometimes it is better to give the child up for

adoption than force an incompatible marriage and surely, abortion is never a biblical option.

- D. Do not marry for sympathy for another. Some people marry out of sympathy for a person who is sick, had a bad experience or a miserable home life. Many women have a “mother instinct” and want to care for someone, but not necessarily love him.
- E. Do not marry to rid yourself of loneliness. Some people will take anything that is breathing and warm to get rid of the extreme feeling of loneliness. They marry for companionship only. Many widows and widowers marry for this reason alone.
- F. Do not marry to say you are married. Some people just have an infatuation with marriage. They are enamored with the thrill and novelty of “playing house” and bearing children. Some marry for parenthood, re-population and continuation of a bloodline and family name.
- G. Do not marry to get away from pressure. Perhaps a person has had a bad home situation and wants to get out of it. A woman may marry to get out of a competitive job or ill-suited career.
- H. Do not marry to fill your own insecurity. Perhaps a person has had a recent failure or disappointment and he or she marries just to fill the need for security. Many divorced people marry for this reason alone.
- I. Do not marry on the rebound. Many people marry because they have been dumped in a romance and they feel they better marry what they can get before there is no one left. They also marry to fill a security need.
- J. Do not marry because you think you have found the ideal person. Some people marry because they think they found a person who is just like mom or dad and they need a father or mother image. Sometimes they think they have found the perfect person of which there are none. The last perfect person to walk the earth was crucified on a cross.
- K. Do not marry for social respectability. Many marry for social relationships, respectability and community acceptance. Marriage in our society has been virtually a membership card to our social structures. Our community systems have an unspoken prejudice against singles.
- L. Do not marry for money. Both men and women, but especially women, often marry for money. Money is security. Yet money and security without love will ultimately be destructive to a marriage. A person must be constantly checking his motives as to why he or she wants to get married. Often we find our motives are very worldly.
- M. Do not rationalize into marriage.
 1. Some of the more typical rationalizations to get married are:
 - a. I cannot get through college without a wife or husband.
 - b. I need a good wife or husband to settle me down (however, if you do not settle down before you find a good man or woman you probably will never get a good mate).
 - c. I need security in my life.
 - d. I am ugly in appearance and this is my last chance to get a mate so I had better take what I can get.

- e. I need natural release for the sex drives which are so strong.
- 2. Do not regard marriage as the solution to life's problems. Christ is the solution to life's problems. Marriage means innumerable responsibilities and pressure. Marriage is wonderful, but it is for those who are ready for it because of spiritual, emotional, physical and mental maturity.