

## LESSON 8

# FAMILY ETHICS

### Introduction

Christianity has a message for those who are preparing for and looking forward to marriage, for the newly-weds, for those with small children, and for mature adults. The Christian faith has a great deal of help to offer people in each phase of life. Marriage is the most intimate relationship which can exist between two individuals. This relationship can bring happiness and fulfilment to both parties, or it can bring frustration and sadness to one or both.

The foundations for a stable society are laid by the successful instilling of healthy attitudes of self-respect, respect for others, and a sane approach to sex and life into the members of society—children, young people, and adults alike. Some of the principles which will contribute to this goal will be considered in this chapter.

### The Nature of Marriage

#### Ordained by God

After creating the heavens and the earth, the animals, the plants, and other forms of life, God created man. He was the crown of God's creation and had the responsibility of dominion over all the rest of creation. The image of God in man, that divine spark which makes it possible for man to respond to God, distinguishes him from animal creation. Upon contemplating the man whom He had created, God saw that it was not good that man should be alone; therefore, God made woman to be man's helpmate and companion. As a helpmate, woman has given man a source of stimulus and assistance which helps him to achieve far more than he could do alone. She is a companion to prevent boredom and listlessness. The sexual union of the two is the highest expression of unity of body, mind, and soul. When man contemplated the woman whom God had provided for him, he said, 'This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man' (Gen. 2:23). God gave man the instructions 'Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh' (Gen. 2:24). In this commandment, God established the home and ordained its existence during the course of man's history.

God gave His blessing to marriage in uniting two people to form a union that could fulfil the necessary functions to enhance their lives. His purpose was for two people to so unite their lives that they could work to achieve the same goals, rear their children, and experience mutually satisfying objectives between them.

#### The purposes of marriage

Marriage has many purposes which serve man's welfare. Perhaps the basic purpose is companionship between people who have enough similarities to create harmony and enough

LIST THREE ATTITUDES WHICH MUST BE INSTILLED IN ALL AGE GROUPS IN ORDER TO HAVE A STABLE SOCIETY.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

*(Compare your answers with the text.)*

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FILL IN THE BLANKS.

The home was ordained or established by \_\_\_\_\_ when He created woman for man and gave them the instructions found in Genesis 2:24. These instructions were to

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*(Compare your answer with the Scripture in the text.)*

One of the purposes of marriage is c\_\_\_\_\_.

*(companionship)*

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differences to stimulate each other. Man is a gregarious creature (one that tends to associate with others) and needs to have fellowship with other human beings. He is capable of a variety of responses to stimuli which come from different personalities. People communicate in a variety of ways: they use voice, gestures, eye contact, and other forms of body language. All of these means of communication are used between marriage partners. Between them, there are intimate levels of communication which enrich life. Marriage without companionship is meaningless and tends to diminish the two people involved.

Marriage partners have the responsibility of developing a quality of companionship which will stimulate each other to live productive lives. Unfortunately this relationship is lacking in some marriages, and either one or both partners go outside the marriage relationship to satisfy their needs for companionship. This may be done with a return to the place of diversion of the 'guys in the office', or with companions and activities which were engaged in before marriage, or in extramarital affairs. These activities are symptoms of, or indications of, disintegration in the companionship between the two.

Reproduction is another basic purpose of marriage. When God created man and woman, He gave them the commandment 'Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth' (Gen. 1:28). God's purpose in giving this commandment was the preservation of the human race. Man is made with a sexual urge that is varied in intensity but more or less constant in every human being. This sex drive guarantees the continuation of the human race, and, in our generation, it has come to create one of the most serious threats to man—population explosion at a rate that is greater than man's capacity to provide food and shelter. Some use Genesis 1:28 as an argument against the use of artificial means to prevent conception and insist that God intended for all the people to be born into the world who naturally result from acts of procreation. However, others recognize that God's basic purpose in giving the commandment has been fulfilled and that there should be some limitation to the number of people upon the earth.

While it seems desirable that each couple decide how many children they want and how many they can adequately take care of, each marriage needs children in order to give a sense of completion and fulfilment. Some homes are denied this privilege because of physical ailments which prevent them from having children. Other homes have so many children that existence becomes a constant struggle and even minimal needs are not supplied for the children. Children have a right to be born into homes in which they are wanted and welcomed, and such acceptance gives them a better life. Maston says, 'Any husband and wife who can and should have children and who deliberately and permanently thwart this basic purpose of marriage are violating a fundamental law of marriage and will have to pay a penalty for their violation.'<sup>1</sup> Every marriage should experience the blessing and joy that comes with rearing children.

Another important purpose of marriage is to be a channel for the legitimate expression of the sexual impulse. Sex is not exclusively to guarantee the preservation of the human race; it is also a means of expressing love and experiencing satisfaction. This expression brings enrichment to life and makes the

<sup>1</sup>T. B. Maston, *Christianity and World Issues* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1957), p. 70.

## FILL IN THE BLANKS.

Since man is a g \_\_\_\_\_ c \_\_\_\_\_,  
he needs the stimulation of communication with others.

(gregarious creature)

Another basic purpose of marriage is r \_\_\_\_\_.  
The sexual urge assures the continuation of the h \_\_\_\_\_  
r \_\_\_\_\_, but it has also brought about the serious problem  
of p \_\_\_\_\_ e \_\_\_\_\_.

(reproduction, human race, population explosion)

Another purpose of marriage is for legitimate s \_\_\_\_\_  
expression.

(sexual)

couple more compatible in other areas.

There are some who feel that sex is 'dirty' and, therefore, to be avoided. For them sexual expression in marriage is shadowed by the guilt which results from a feeling that they are doing something which is base or carnal. This attitude is unfortunate because it prevents so many people from experiencing the full enjoyment that God intends. Sex has been prostituted and reduced by many to nothing more than a passing stimulation of nerves and an absence of emotional involvement. On this level sex is cheap and unsatisfying.

The Roman Catholic position regarding the use of contraceptives limits the pleasure which may be derived from sexual expression in marriage. Sexual intercourse is accompanied by the threat and fear of pregnancy except on certain days of the month which are difficult to discern in most women. This difficulty prevents couples from participating in the act of love without some element of preoccupation. Although the Catholic Church has insisted on maintaining this position, indications are that an increasing number of Catholics do not take this prohibition seriously. In a day when there are adequate methods to prevent conception when couples have all the children that they desire, married couples are medically, ethically, and spiritually correct to use these methods.

Some have used the celibacy of Jesus and Paul as a basis for saying that marriage is short of the ideal and only a means of expressing the sexual urge for those who cannot give themselves completely to a life of service to God and man without the involvements of a family. This idea is erroneous. The Jews in Jesus' day gave a lot of importance to the family and considered marriage a normal way of life. Jesus did not marry because He came to the world for a special purpose which was fulfilled best through a life of celibacy. Paul did not marry because he expected the immediate return of Jesus to earth and was more interested in spreading the message of the gospel as far and as quickly as possible. But neither Jesus nor Paul intended that man take his example of celibacy as a norm for all mankind. Nor did they intend it to become the norm for religious leaders.

The discovery of 'the pill' to prevent conception has brought a revolution in birth control, even among Catholics. It has been discovered that doctors may prescribe the pill as a means of regulating the menstrual cycle of women. They can thus take the pill for a legitimate reason, and the side effects are such that they do not fear an unwanted pregnancy as much as before. Some priests have given tacit assent to this practice.<sup>2</sup>

Pressure has also been exerted to cancel the requirement that priests be celibate. A large number of priests have renounced the priesthood and opted for matrimony. Even though the Pope has insisted upon the practice of celibacy for the priesthood, discontentment is growing with his requirement among clergy and laity. This requirement may be discontinued in the near future.

It is recognized that some people do not have a strong desire to be married and have a home and children. They can live happy and productive lives without marriage. They should have this right, and it should be recognized that there is a distinctive contribution which they can make. Pressures should

#### FILL IN THE BLANKS

A wholesome attitude for married couples to take on the use of contraceptives is \_\_\_\_\_

(Compare your answer with the text. See the last sentence of this paragraph.)

Jesus did not marry because \_\_\_\_\_

Paul did not marry because \_\_\_\_\_

Did Jesus and Paul intend for their examples of celibacy to be the norm for mankind? \_\_\_\_\_ For religious leaders? \_\_\_\_\_

(Compare your answers with the text.)

#### TRUE OR FALSE?

Those who choose not to marry and have children should have that right, and it should be recognized that they can make a distinctive contribution also. \_\_\_\_\_

(Compare your answer with the text.)

<sup>2</sup>B. J. Taylor, 'This Baby Will Be My Last', *Redbook*, July 1965, p. 10.

not be placed upon them to conform to the pattern which is followed by the majority of people in the world. Rather, we should give them the freedom to live their style of life and rejoice with them in the meaning which they find in it.

### An exclusive union

Marriage is an exclusive union in that two people unite in a way that excludes all others. God's ideal is that each man have one woman with whom to live in marriage throughout life. Temporary mating and pairing off is practised by some animals, but it is contrary to God's design for man and his nature. There are numerous cases in the Old Testament in which men had more than one wife, but there are also evidences that this practice brought negative consequences (Gen. 21:9-16). Although God used these people in carrying forth His plan for humanity, there is no evidence that He approved of polygamy (1 Kings 11:1-6; Mal. 2:15-16).

Jesus affirmed monogamy (Matt. 19:4, 6). Paul also recognized the proper place of marriage, although he recommended celibacy for reasons that have already been mentioned (1 Cor. 7:1-16). Neither Jesus nor Paul approved of extramarital relations; rather they counselled husbands and wives to be faithful in the vows which they had taken.

Free love, premarital sex, and extramarital relations have become more common today than they were in the past. Many of the traditional mores have been rejected in recent years, and acceptance of practices and beliefs which previously were forbidden has occurred. But ultimately man either obeys God's laws or destroys himself in rebellion against them. What may, at the moment, have the appearance of 'escaping from the consequences of wrong behaviour' will ultimately be recognized as God's patience in dealing with wayfaring man. The individual, the home, and the society ultimately suffer because of man's disregard for His laws.

Marriage has a good beginning when the two partners enter into it with a determination to make it permanent and meaningful. The idea of the 'open-ended marriage' is incompatible with Christian principles. If two people enter into marriage with the thought that it may not be permanent, then they are sowing the first seeds of discontent and may expect ultimate dissolution of the contract. On the other hand, when the two carefully contemplate the step they are taking, pray about the matter, and feel assured that there is a reasonable degree of security about the permanency of the union, the marriage has a greater chance of succeeding.

### A union of love

The ideal union in marriage is one where love prevails. Much has been said in the past about the advantages of marriages without romance; however, more persons are now recognizing that love gives a dimension to marriage which enriches life for both partners. There may have been a time in history when marriages arranged by the relatives were satisfactory and when convenience marriages gave the level of satisfaction that the two people expected. However, today most people want more than this. In our day, women have gained more and more freedom and rights, and they are recognized as equal to men. They are no longer counted as a part of the property of a man, and thus they expect more in marriage.

### FILL IN THE BLANKS

'Marriage is an exclusive union' means that two people \_\_\_\_\_ in a way that \_\_\_\_\_ all others. Two scripture references which indicate God did not approve of Old Testament polygamy are \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

### BE SURE TO FIND AND READ ALL THE SCRIPTURE REFERENCES.

### MATCH THE FOLLOWING.

Jesus	1. affirmed monogamy.
Paul	2. recognized the proper place of marriage.
	3. did not approve of extramarital relations.

(Jesus—1, 3; Paul—2, 3)

### FILL IN THE BLANKS.

**D** \_\_\_\_\_ to make the marriage **p** \_\_\_\_\_ and **m** \_\_\_\_\_ contributes to a good beginning in marriage.

(Determination, permanent, meaningful)

'Open-ended marriage' is when a couple enters into marriage thinking that it need not be \_\_\_\_\_.

(permanent)

**L** \_\_\_\_\_ adds a **d** \_\_\_\_\_ to marriage which enriches both **p** \_\_\_\_\_.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

The husband should love his wife. This involves more than seeing her as a housekeeper or a maid to look after his clothes, prepare his meals, and take care of his children, in addition to serving as a sex partner when he wants one. Love is being sensitive to the needs of the wife and taking the necessary steps to assure her happiness and fulfilment. Some women are completely content to be housewives and mothers, and they need few activities outside the home to make them happy. Others need outlets which give them activity and recognition. The husband should be sensitive to the needs of his wife and give her the freedom to find fulfilment in her life. Love involves more than physical expression of affection; it also includes an attitude of confidence, a mutuality in values and beliefs, and a personal interest to the point of self-sacrifice.

In commenting upon love as the principal basis of marriage, Georgia Harkness insists that there must be a combination of *eros*, *filia*, and *agape*.<sup>3</sup> *Eros* is the desire to possess the object of love in the physical sense. *Filia* goes beyond friendship and touches upon the common interests of the two. *Agape* does not have the warmth of *filia* nor the intensity of *eros*, but it is the self-giving kind of love that thinks first of the other and seeks to meet his needs without thinking of one's own needs. The *agape* quality is the element that grows through the years and gives the inner resources to face adversity undefeated. 'The absence of *agape* love is the major cause of the appalling percentage of divorce in contemporary marriages, and the root of much unhappiness in legally persisting but inwardly severed marriage bonds.'<sup>4</sup>

### Divorce

Once marriage has been contracted and solemnized, is it legal and right to dissolve it? If so, under what conditions? In places where marriages may be dissolved legally, is it morally right to dissolve them under the same conditions which the law permits? These are some of the most difficult questions for Christian ethicists.

#### The biblical position

In the day of Moses, divorce was widely practised. In fact, it was so common that Moses gave laws to limit its practice (Deut. 24:1-4). Divorce was the sole right of the husband. The Mosaic legislation had the purpose of restricting conditions for divorce. The man had to find some fault, some 'uncleanness' in his wife. He was to write out a formal document, deliver it to her, and send her away from the house. Once divorced, the wife could not subsequently be brought back to the house, even if her second husband should die. An interesting point about this provision of the Mosaic legislation is that the woman, upon being divorced, had the right to marry someone else.

The prophets pronounced messages of judgement upon the people because of their liberal attitudes about divorce and marrying outside the Jewish race. Divorce appears to have been a more serious problem during the later years of the history of the two kingdoms (Mal. 2:11-12; Ezra 10:2-17). Perhaps the years in captivity contributed to the laxity with which the

#### FILL IN THE BLANKS.

For a husband to love his wife in the truest sense, he should be s\_\_\_\_\_ to her needs and assure her h\_\_\_\_\_ and f\_\_\_\_\_.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

True love also includes: an attitude of c\_\_\_\_\_, a mutuality in v\_\_\_\_\_ and b\_\_\_\_\_, and self-s\_\_\_\_\_.

(confidence, values, beliefs, sacrifice)

Divorce was so prevalent in the day of Moses that he gave laws to \_\_\_\_\_ its practice. These laws restricted the conditions for \_\_\_\_\_.

(limit, divorce)

What was the attitude of the prophets towards divorce?

(They pronounced judgement upon the people)

<sup>3</sup>Georgia Harkness. *Christian Ethics* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1957), p. 132.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

people followed the precepts which had been given to them. But Malachi and Ezra seemed to feel that the only solution to the foreign marriages was a dissolution of them.

Jesus lived in a day in which there was much controversy over divorce. In the interbiblical period, two schools of interpretation concerning Moses' laws had evolved. The rabbinical school of Hillel gave a liberal interpretation to the words 'an indecent thing' (Deut. 24:1, RSV) in Moses' legislation and permitted divorce for most any reason. The Shammai school of interpretation was more strict and permitted divorce only in case of adultery.

When the Pharisees asked Jesus what He taught about divorce, He responded by pointing them back to the ideal which God established in the beginning (Matt. 19:3-9). That ideal was that a man should leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife throughout life. No man should attempt to dissolve the union that God had made, a union based upon the deliberate act of two people. Upon being pressured about Moses' permission to divorce, Jesus gave only one basis which would justify divorce—adultery.

The clause 'except it be for fornication' (Matt. 19:9) has been subject to controversial interpretation during the course of Christian history. It does not appear in the Gospels of Mark and Luke, and some believe that it was not in the original Matthaean manuscript. Others argue that the appearance of the 'exception clause' in Matthew is sufficient evidence to make it applicable today. However, since divorce was such a controversial issue in Jesus' day, why was this clause not included by Mark and Luke? Interpreters find it interesting that Paul did not refer to this clause of exception in his writings concerning marriage (Rom. 7:2-3; 1 Cor. 7:10ff.).

Some also see a disparity between this clause in Matthew and the general attitude of understanding and forgiveness which Jesus showed in specific cases, such as the woman taken in the act of adultery (John 8:3-11) and the woman of Samaria (John 4:7-26).

Even if the exception clause in Matthew is recognized as valid, there is difficulty in interpreting what it means. Jesus used the word in Greek which is translated fornication and not the word for adultery. Generally, *fornication* is defined as the sex act between two people who are unmarried, and *adultery* refers to sexual intercourse with a person who is married. However, the problem of divorce in Jesus' day was more a point of concern of people who were married and had sex with others, which was adultery and not fornication. This problem points up the fact that it is difficult to be very legalistic in the interpretation given to the words of Jesus. The intent of His teaching is difficult to outline in exact terms. Perhaps He was trying to avoid being identified with either of the two rabbinical schools of interpretation.

### The Roman Catholic position

The Roman Catholic Church has been critical of Evangelicals, saying that they permit and promote divorce. The Catholic position is that marriage is one of the sacraments of the Church and, therefore, indissoluble. It opposes civil marriage ceremonies and encourages Catholics to be married only within the Church.

The Roman Catholic Church does recognize circumstances in which marriages can be declared null because of some

### MATCH THE SCHOOL WITH ITS TEACHING.

Hillel	was strict and permitted divorce only for adultery.
Shammai	was liberal and permitted divorce for most any reason.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

### BRIEFLY SUMMARIZE JESUS' TEACHING ABOUT DIVORCE AS FOUND IN MATTHEW 19:3-9.

(Compare your answer with the Scripture and the text.)

What is the 'exception clause'?

Is this clause found in all the Gospels? \_\_\_\_\_

In which one is it found? \_\_\_\_\_

(*'except it be for fornication', no, Matthew*)

What is the Roman Catholic stance on marriage ceremonies and divorce?

(Compare your answers with the text.)

impediment which was present at the time of the ceremony and, therefore, made it invalid.<sup>5</sup> This practice has become a means of escape from unfortunate marriages for many people. Although the technical circumstances may be present, the greater purpose is to free the parties from an unfortunate union.

In predominantly Catholic countries there are serious problems of concubinage, common-law marriages, and abandonments of the home because of the limits which the Catholic Church has placed upon people's freedom to marry. In some countries it is quite expensive to marry according to the Roman Catholic practice, and many do not have the money to invest in the ceremony. In some countries, many prefer to live together without ceremonies because a ceremony makes the contract more permanent than they are willing to accept. In cases where people do get married and find that there is incompatibility, the results are usually separation or abandonment and establishment of illicit relations with someone else. Children are born into the newly formed homes, but they are not legitimate. This practice creates another set of problems, and thus the situation becomes more complicated.

This situation illustrates the fact that prohibiting divorce does not solve all the problems that result from marriages that do not last. The question must be asked, 'Is divorce a viable option and a better solution to all these problems?' Perhaps it is better to admit that people—Catholics, Protestants, Jews, and those with no religion—make mistakes in marriage. How can we help these people to achieve some degree of happiness and to live normal lives?

The possibility exists that by denying or forbidding divorce two people are forced to continue living in a relationship which is mutually unsatisfying and destructive. The argument that two incompatible people stay together for the good of the children probably is fallacious also because the negative effects upon the children may be greater than the results of a clean break of divorce.

The point should be made that divorce is not the unpardonable sin. God can forgive the mistakes of the past. However, divorce is not the solution in many cases, and two people contemplating divorce should face the basic problems causing their incompatibility. It is possible that through counselling they can recognize the cause of their incompatibility and be led into a healthy marriage relationship. However, in cases where efforts to reconcile their differences fail, perhaps Christian grace would make it possible for the relationship to be dissolved by divorce.

Adequate preparation for marriage is perhaps the greatest deterrent to divorce. This preparation should begin in childhood. A child begins to formulate ideas and values as he observes his parents and others in the intimate relationship of marriage. He will absorb many teachings through the years of physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual development. He should be prepared for marriage by passing through the normal stages of friendship, dating, courtship, and engagement, then he will be able to move into marriage because he is convinced that his choice is a wise one and one that will bring years of happiness to both parties.

<sup>5</sup>Henry A. Ayrinhac, *Marriage Legislation in the New Code of the Canon Law* (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1918), pp. 122-89.

FILL IN THE BLANKS.

Divorce is not the u \_\_\_\_\_ s \_\_\_\_\_. God can f \_\_\_\_\_ past m \_\_\_\_\_. One way of preventing divorce is to face basic problems causing i \_\_\_\_\_.

*(unpardonable sin, forgive, mistakes, incompatibility)*

The best prevention for divorce is adequate p \_\_\_\_\_ for marriage.

*(preparation)*

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Is divorce an obligation in cases where the marriage vows have been broken by adultery? Jesus did not make such a requirement. In the Old Testament there is the case of Hosea whose wife left him to become a temple prostitute in the worship of Baal. However, Hosea loved her and purchased her in the market and restored her as his wife after others had discarded her (Hos. 1—3). In cases where unfaithfulness can be forgiven and there is a good basis for a healthy and satisfactory relationship, the marriage should continue. Without a spirit of forgiveness, a couple should consider the alternative of divorce or separation.

Does divorce give the parties the right to remarry? Doubtless that was the intention during the time of Moses, as is the case in most countries which permit divorce. Otherwise, there would be no purpose in divorce. There are numerous cases of people who have failed in their first marriage but achieved a high degree of happiness in a second marriage. The Christian gospel offers hope to those who have experienced failure: forgiveness and restoration to the guilt-ridden and a new beginning to those who desire it. Can we do less?

There are no easy solutions to the problems related to divorce. A categorical solution to every question and problem would be wonderful. Then we could neatly fit people into these solutions. But man is not a machine, and human behaviour is very complicated. There was a time when, in a divorce over infidelity, one marriage partner was declared guilty and the other innocent and, therefore, free to marry again. However, how can we say that anyone is completely guilty or innocent in complicated problems like these? The attitude and actions of Jesus help a lot at this point. Christ respected the personality of each individual and sought to enrich life for every person, regardless of his situation and his problem. If this concept is our attitude, then we will not be slaves to fixed rules; rather we will walk with people in their dark moments and seek to point them to the way that will bring greater contentment and ultimate glory to God's Kingdom.

### Mixed Marriages

What is meant by the term *mixed marriages*? Marriages can be mixed because of differences in religion, race, nationality, culture, and possibly other factors. We usually refer to differences in religion more than to any other area.

Most all religious leaders are zealous for their followers to marry within the same faith. Jews, Catholics, and Protestants especially encourage this procedure. When two people have the same religious and spiritual tradition, they will have a greater area of commonality on which to build a stable marriage. When there are great differences in this area, the differences will detract from the areas which enhance stability.

When an Evangelical marries a Catholic, pressure is put upon the non-Catholic party to surrender rights that have to do with the religious teaching of the children. The Evangelical is urged to let the children be reared as Catholics and to make no effort to persuade the Catholics to leave their faith. One finds it easy to agree to this at the moment when he is swept by emotion, but later many have come to regret having made this agreement. This kind of agreement certainly involves a lot of commitment in the future and should not be entered into lightly.

FILL IN THE BLANKS.

Divorce was not required in the case of adultery. Another alternative to divorce is an attitude of l \_\_\_\_\_ and f \_\_\_\_\_.

(love, forgiveness)

There are no e \_\_\_\_\_ s \_\_\_\_\_ to the problem of divorce. However, a Christlike attitude of r \_\_\_\_\_ for the p \_\_\_\_\_ of each individual will help.

(easy solution, respect, personality)

'Mixed marriage' refers to the marriage of a couple of different \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and possibly \_\_\_\_\_.

(Compare your answers with the text on the previous page.)

When a couple has the same religious and spiritual traditions, a greater commonality exists on which to build a s \_\_\_\_\_ marriage.

(stable)

Paul insisted that Christians ought not to marry those who are not believers:

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?

(2 Cor. 6:14-15)

Certainly there is wisdom in these words. If the faith of two people means much to either or both of them, then they should have common religious beliefs. Otherwise, there will be a great deal of discussion, ill feelings, and discord. But when the two people are committed Christians, they have a sound basis upon which to build their marriage.

What about marriages between people with other differences? We may establish the norm that the more aspects of life which two people have in common the greater the possibility of harmony and happiness in marriage. When there are vast cultural differences that are a result of different nationalities and/or races, naturally there are more barriers to overcome. Although the Bible does contain some cases of marriages between persons of different nationalities and cultures, the biblical message seems to affirm the fact that mixed marriages have special problems connected with them. In Old Testament times, the prohibitions against mixed marriages had a lot to do with the preservation of the faith of Israel and also the blood of the Jewish people. Timothy, in the New Testament, was the product of a mixed marriage, and yet he was effective in service to the Lord. Therefore, we cannot say that mixed marriages should be prohibited, but we can say that young people should be encouraged to consider the consequences carefully.

What about interracial marriages? These marriages have many barriers to overcome, including the prejudice of the majority of the people. This prejudice is slowly breaking down, but much more needs to be done in this area before there can be acceptance on the part of all parties involved. Mixed marriages may succeed if the couples are open and objective about the differences and difficulties which they will face.

## Family Relationships

### Between husbands and wives

The relationships between husbands and wives are the most intimate of all relationships. Each one knows the other, his strengths and weaknesses, his dreams and frustrations, and his joys and sorrows. After a few years of marriage two people can come to anticipate the reactions to stimuli, and some testify that they can even read their partner's thoughts!

Paul wrote clear instructions to husbands and wives (Eph. 5:22-33; Col. 3:18-19). Peter also counselled husbands and wives (1 Pet. 3:1-8). The predominant duty of wives, according to Paul and Peter, is that of submission to their husbands. We need to recognize that these words were spoken at a time when women did not enjoy the same privileges they have today. In some areas of the world, the wife's main duty is still that of submission because of the social customs which prevail. In the more westernized nations, women resist the idea that their submission is to be so pronounced, and they insist upon treatment more equal to that accorded to men. Most

FILL IN THE BLANKS.

Paul's attitude towards the marriage of a believer and an unbeliever was that they \_\_\_\_\_.

(Compare your answer with the text.)

A good principle to consider when a mixed marriage is considered is that the more aspects of life which two people have in common, the greater the possibility of h \_\_\_\_\_ and h \_\_\_\_\_.

(harmony, happiness)

According to Paul and Peter, the wife is to be s \_\_\_\_\_ to her husband.

(submissive)

women are willing for the man to be the chief breadwinner, the chief spokesman (at least in public), and the more aggressive. But there is no place for the despot or for a lack of respect for the wife on the part of the husband. His duty to love and honour his wife does not give him the licence to mistreat her.

The husband should have the main authority in determining such questions as the place of residence, since his work or profession will largely dictate this matter. He should take the main responsibility for the support of the home. The prudent wife should not criticize him constantly because of his lack of achievement, low income, or other factors which threaten his ego strength. Rather, she should seek to support and promote him in his work and be cooperative concerning the family budget in order to provide that which is necessary for all the members of the family. Major decisions should be made only after both have carefully considered all the factors involved.

As parents, they should be in accord, as far as possible, in the discipline of the children. Discipline will not be the sole responsibility of either partner; rather it will be shared by both. When discipline is called for, then it will be meted out by the parent present at the moment without threats of future punishment by the other parent.

Conflicts over such problems as finances, the work-load of each member of the home, recreational and social activities, and the use of free time will naturally come. If the couple can lay down some broad principles in these major areas and then follow them, numerous minor conflicts may be avoided during the course of the years.

Open lines of communication between marriage partners are vitally important. Each should feel free to express his frustrations, his needs, and his complaints. When there is no freedom to express feelings, these emotions tend to become bottled up and to develop into greater problems. They then come gushing forth in conflicts which attain greater significance than would have been necessary if they could have been expressed through open communication and in a less emotionally charged atmosphere.

The sexual relationship may be a source of conflict between husband and wife. Time is required for a couple to reach a degree of mutual satisfaction in the sexual relationship. Much depends upon whether or not each has had adequate sex education and has developed wholesome attitudes about sex. For some who have had no sex education or who have been taught that sex is filthy or an evidence of carnality, a longer period may be required to reach a satisfactory adjustment. Both partners must be tender and patient. Usually the pleasure from sexual relations increases as the couple progresses in their adaptation to each other in this and other areas.

When difficulties arise, they should be faced frankly and openly from the beginning. Greater harm comes from trying to hide them or letting them smoulder under the surface and build up in importance and tension. Usually a helpful counsellor—a well-adjusted adult, pastor, or professional—can assist the young couple over the rough spots in their sexual adjustment. The young couple experiencing problems should not hesitate to seek help.

Not all people have the sexual impulse with the same degree of intensity. In some cases, one partner may have intense and almost constant sexual desire and thus want to engage in intercourse frequently. On the other hand, the other partner may

#### FILL IN THE BLANKS.

The husband should have the main authority in determining place of \_\_\_\_\_ since this involves his work or profession. He should take the main responsibility of \_\_\_\_\_ the family. Both the husband and wife should be involved in the making of mayor \_\_\_\_\_.

*(residence, supporting, decisions)*

Husbands and wives should be in accord in the \_\_\_\_\_ of children.

*(discipline)*

Areas of possible conflict are: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ of each, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ activities, and the use of \_\_\_\_\_ time.

*(Compare your answers with the text.)*

To avoid conflict in marriage, open lines of \_\_\_\_\_ must be maintained.

*(communication)*

Another possible source of conflict in marriage is the \_\_\_\_\_ relationship.

*(sexual)*

When difficulties arise they should be faced \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

*(frankly and openly)*

desire sex less frequently. The two should talk openly about their needs and desires and work together towards a point of compromise that will be acceptable to both of them. Each one must be willing to yield to some degree and remember that submission to the needs of the other is a Christian virtue. Selfishness on the part of either or both tends to increase the differences that separate them.

A couple should discuss the number of children that they want and plan together for their birth. This important matter should not be left to chance. It is wise to wait for a time after marriage before having children to insure a satisfactory adjustment of the couple. This period provides time to stabilize the home economically. It is a thrilling experience to see young couples move into marriage, lay solid foundations for their future, and then welcome wanted children into their homes. Although the home experiences may not happen as anticipated, the capacity for adaptation is unlimited, and couples can adjust to and live happily with any number of situations that might not have been planned. Unexpected expenses, economic reverses, and surprise pregnancies can ultimately become blessings for the family that is flexible and open to change.

There are many steps that a couple can take to reduce tension and conflict in their marriage. A good sense of humour and capacity to laugh together will go a long way towards alleviating the tension of many circumstances. A couple must not magnify minor problems and let them become more serious than they really are. Talking together about the possible solutions to problems usually causes them to vanish. An intimate conversation with a friend or confidant may go a long way towards releasing the tension produced by conflicts.

The couple should feel united in the midst of pleasures, sorrows, problems, successes, and failures. This union will help them to face any situation frankly and to work together to find the best solution. Togetherness will make marriage a pathway to happiness and fulfilment, both individually and as companions.

### Between parents and children

Children, obey your parents in the Lord; for this is right.

Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise.

(Eph. 6:1-2)

The discipline of children is one area that usually occasions a conflict in the home. In this passage, Paul commanded the children to obey and honour their parents. Children should see their parents as the first source of authority. Later this sphere of authority will be enlarged to include teachers in school, law enforcement officers, employers, and others. If children do not learn proper respect for authority as they relate to their parents, they may be rebellious towards all other symbols of authority. If parents fail to teach this proper respect during the first years of life, they will probably face many more serious problems with their children in relation to other sources of authority later. Juvenile delinquency is a natural result of a lack of parental authority during the first years of life.

Discipline is an important aspect of development in children. It should be fair, firm, and consistent and meted out in an atmosphere of love and acceptance. Parents should take every precaution to see that their children do not feel rejected because of their acts of disobedience or infractions of the rules. Judgement can come within the context of acceptance

LIST SOME STEPS WHICH CAN REDUCE TENSION AND CONFLICT.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

(Compare your answers with the text.)

---

FILL IN THE BLANKS.

In Ephesians 6:1-2, Paul commands children to \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ their parents.

(obey, honour)

Children should see their parents as the first source of \_\_\_\_\_. If they do not, they may be rebellious towards other \_\_\_\_\_.

(authority, authorities)

Discipline is important to the development of children. It should be f\_\_\_\_\_, f\_\_\_\_\_, c\_\_\_\_\_, and meted out in l\_\_\_\_\_ and a\_\_\_\_\_.

(firm, fair, consistent, love, acceptance)

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rather than rejection. If children can feel that they are being corrected because of their parents' love for them and because the parents have their own welfare at the centre of their interest, then they will accept discipline without nursing resentment, anger, or hatred. Paul's injunction to parents is important to remember, 'Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged' (Col. 3:21).

Children need to develop a sense of security that will give them confidence and tranquillity as they face life. This peace comes as a result of having security and love during childhood. The parents may be the source of insecurity which is communicated unconsciously to the children. If the parents discuss their differences in the presence of the children, argue violently, or express other forms of discord, the children will naturally feel that their security in the home is threatened. If the parents make fun of the children because of some characteristic or peculiarity, they are sowing the seeds of insecurity.

It is important that the child identify physically and emotionally with the parent of his own sex. In cases where this parent is absent because of divorce, abandonment, or death, a surrogate parent (a substitute parent) should be found—this will help the child to understand who he is and help him to find his place among those of his own sex. Many psychologists believe that the roots of homosexuality are found in a confusion within the child about who he is because of the lack of proper identification with those of his own sex. The child can be made to feel good about who he is and the roles that have been assigned to him or her by society and culture.

Sex education is an important part of rearing children. The parents should be prepared to hear and respond to the first questions that come from children about sex. If they answer the questions with an attitude of calmness, confidence, openness, and truthfulness, the curiosity of the children will be satisfied and their sexual emotions and interests will develop normally. On the other hand, if the answers are evasive and resentful and characterized by embarrassment or false information, then they will develop an exaggerated curiosity about sex and will seek further information from other sources. Sex will become something of a mystery for them, a prohibition, or an object of fear. Sex education should be progressive. Simple answers to the first questions are adequate. The answers can become more complete and complicated as the child develops in his ability to comprehend. But parents should realize how important it is to teach attitudes by example and precept along with the communication of facts. The presence of pets, the occasion of the birth of a baby in the home or among neighbours and relatives, and other normal experiences of life are occasions when sex education can be taught as a normal, matter-of-fact part of life.

Parents need to make it clear that they would like to be their children's source of information about sex. Parents should not be overly alarmed when they find magazines or books about sex among their children's possessions. Interest in sex is a natural occurrence among adolescents and evidences a normal curiosity at this stage of development. Extreme reactions can cause the youth to hide his feelings and repress his sexuality. Repression may prove to be harmful at a later date. Extreme reactions may cause the children to seek this information 'in the streets' from unreliable and harmful sources.

#### FILL IN THE BLANKS.

Children need to develop a sense of s \_\_\_\_\_ which will give them c \_\_\_\_\_ and t \_\_\_\_\_.

(*security, confidence, tranquillity*)

Children's development is dependent on p \_\_\_\_\_ and e \_\_\_\_\_ identification with the parent of their own sex.

(*Compare your answers with the text.*)

Another aspect of children's development is \_\_\_\_\_ education.

(*sex*)

#### TRUE OR FALSE?

1. Simple answers to first questions about sex are adequate. \_\_\_\_\_
2. Parents' attitudes when answering questions about sex are not important. \_\_\_\_\_
3. Normal experiences of life can help in communicating the facts about sex. \_\_\_\_\_

(*1. True, 2. False, 3. True*)

The religious instruction of children is another area that concerns parents. Christian parents will take seriously the admonition to 'bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord' (Eph. 6:4b). In this respect, a good example is the best teacher. If the parents have had a genuine religious experience and are sincere in their devotion and religious exercises, then the children will develop a similar appreciation for these values. Such activities as prayers of thanks before meals, reading the Bible and praying during the day, and intimate conversations about spiritual matters will go a long way towards developing the spiritual sensitivity of the children. Parents should accompany their children to church for worship and other activities where the children will receive formal instruction from teachers and peers. They will learn the basic truths about God, the world, the stewardship of life, and the need for a personal faith in Christ as a basis for meaningful living.

The church should cooperate with the family for the enrichment of family life. In his sermons, the pastor should emphasize the various aspects of family relations from time to time. The programme of Christian education in the church should include family matters in its curriculum. Friendship, dating, courtship, and marriage should all be discussed in special programmes and series for study. Special courses may be planned for specific groups and special problems.

The pastor can be a source of help and enrichment for the home. He should be prepared to invest time weekly in personal and group counselling for those with family problems. People in the congregation who have difficulties in this area should not hesitate to go to the pastor and seek his help. If he is unable to help, then he will probably recommend someone who can.

### Conclusion

The Christian faith offers resources which can help every individual from the time of birth on through childhood, youth, marriage, adulthood, and the mature years. This faith gives stability on a personal and family level. Each person can experience greater harmony and fulfilment in his home life when he has a personal relationship to God and uses God's will as the integrating centre of the home. The Bible offers basic principles which serve as underpinnings to give the stability needed in home life. Relationships between husbands and wives, parents and children, and the home and the church experience their fullest satisfaction when these principles form the foundation of the home.

## Home Study Exercises

**Basic assignment** (Levels 1, 2, and 3). Do the following exercise.

1. Who established the home? When was it established?

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2. What are the purposes of marriage?

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FILL IN THE BLANK.

Another important aspect of children's development is \_\_\_\_\_ education.

(religious)

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LIST SOME WAYS THE CHURCH CAN HELP ENRICH FAMILY LIFE.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

(Compare your answers with the text.)

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FILL IN THE BLANKS.

The Christian faith offers resources for every phase of life: c \_\_\_\_\_, y \_\_\_\_\_, m \_\_\_\_\_, a \_\_\_\_\_, m \_\_\_\_\_ years. P \_\_\_\_\_ and f \_\_\_\_\_ stability are based on this faith.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

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3. What is a wholesome attitude for married couples to take on the use of contraceptives?

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4. Can a legitimate case be made for celibacy on the basis that Jesus and Paul were not married? Explain your answer.

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5. What should be the Christian position towards single persons?

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6. What is an exclusive union?

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7. How did God look on polygamy in the Old Testament?

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8. What is 'open-ended marriage'?

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9. How should a husband love his wife?

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10. What position did the following rabbinical schools of interpretation take towards divorce?

Hillel \_\_\_\_\_

Shammai \_\_\_\_\_

11. Where in the New Testament is Jesus' teaching on divorce found? What is the 'exception clause'?

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12. What are some possible means of preventing divorces?

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13. What are some possible areas of conflict between husbands and wives?

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14. What are some possible ways to reduce tension and conflict in marriage?

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15. Explain Ephesians 6 :1- 2.

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16. List important areas in the development of children.

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17. How does the church help enrich family life?

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**Supplementary assignment** (*Levels 2 and 3*). Read pages 111-27 in *Introducing Christian Ethics*, and do the following exercise.

1. List the four fundamental principles of Christian marriage.
2. What position does Dr. Barnette take concerning the 'saving clause'?
3. List the guiding principles which would be helpful in selecting a mate.
4. Explain the meaning of *agape* love in marriage.

**Advanced assignment** (*Level 3*). Do the following additional exercise, based on the above reading assignment.

1. List the views which support the authenticity of the Matthean 'saving clause'.
2. Outline Barnette's discussion of the Christian view of sex.

### **Seminar Discussion**

1. What effects does your culture have upon your church's view of sex, marriage, and children as contrasted to biblical teachings? How does it affect the witness of the Church? What can the Church do to penetrate society with the Christian marriage ethic?
2. What position should your church take on divorce?
3. What is the role of women in your culture? Are they considered equal with men on jobs and in society?
4. How does the Protestant view differ from the Catholic regarding sex?
5. What are the responsibilities of husband, wife, and children in the home? How does an unstable home affect the personality and emotional stability of the child?