

LESSON 4

PRE-MARITAL COUNSELLING

Introduction

With the rapid increase in the number of divorces, ministers are becoming more concerned about preventive measures for broken marriages. In recent years, much study and writing have been done in the area of pre-marital counselling. Most ministers require at least one counselling session in which the wedding ceremony is planned. Others add to the planning session a discussion of adjustments in marriage. Now many ministers are extending the number of sessions in an attempt to prepare young people better for their lifelong roles as partners in marriage. The Scriptures should be studied concerning the nature of the home, the permanency of marriage, the role of husband and wife, the responsibility for adjustment, and the development of happy and successful relations as companions and parents.

The purposes of pre-marital counselling are to define what each partner expects of the other in the marriage relationship and to insure that couples are able to communicate, have faced up to the areas of adjustment in marriage, and understand the seriousness and permanency of marriage. Problems arise when marriage partners have not clearly defined what they consider to be the role of each.

The Pastor's Responsibility

Since marriage is a Christian ordinance and the pastor is a representative of his church, a heavy responsibility is placed upon him and the church for the persons whom they approve to be married. There are varying opinions among the members of a congregation as to whom should be married in their church by their pastor. A careful study of biblical principles should be conducted, and the church and pastor should come to a concensus concerning requirements for those who ask for marriage in the church by the pastor.

A pastor should not conceive of himself as a "marrying parson." The marriage ceremony is a ministry which he can perform, but the responsibility of uniting two people to form a lifelong union is too great for him to take lightly and engage in hurriedly. With the increasing crisis of the home, the pastor must spend more time in attempting to lay solid foundations for every couple which comes to him for marriage.

[Empty box for student response]

Write two purposes of pre-marital counselling

- 1. _____
- 2. _____

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Two facts which place a heavy responsibility on the pastor and his church in determining for whom he will perform the marriage ceremony are:

- 1. Marriage is a _____ ordinance.
- 2. The pastor is a representative of his _____.

(1. Christian, 2. church)

[Empty box for student response]

Pastors are faced with the difficult decision of whether to turn away divorcees and non-Christians. Some refuse to marry persons who have been married previously and have divorced or are non-Christians. Others conclude that to agree to perform the ceremony for these gives the pastor opportunity to minister spiritually to their needs. If he refuses to perform the ceremony, the couple can go down the street and find a government official who will legalize their marriage. Just as a young lady is advised not to agree to marry a young man with the intention of winning him to Christ later, so a pastor should beware of performing a marriage ceremony with the expectation of a later ministry. He would be wiser to perform his spiritual ministry before conducting the ceremony. If one is not a believer in Christ, the pastor's first obligation is to share the good news with him; the second obligation is to share biblical teachings concerning the nature and permanency of marriage. Whether he performs the ceremony may depend on the response of the couple to the pastor's first two ministries. All of the information and instruction needed by a couple cannot be shared in a few minutes; therefore, a pastor might desire to adopt the policy of not performing a ceremony unless he has had ample opportunity for counselling sessions.

A church may decide to require every person whom its pastor marries to be committed believers in Christ. They should be required to go through the rigorous preparation suggested in the following pages. These requirements will develop in the community a respect for the church as a fellowship and as a faithful witness to the Christian gospel. These requirements will not drive away members but will cause people to value their membership more highly. Over a period of months and years, the church will have to make fewer decisions concerning requests from divorced persons for remarriage than the church that does not have such requirements. Young people who are informed about the church requirements will come to appreciate the stand which their church has taken. Couples who participate in the training and counselling sessions will stand a greater chance of making their marriages succeed and will recognize the contribution the church has made to this important area of their lives.

With most people feeling that family life is in trouble, that most couples have not been prepared adequately for marriage, and that religion has lost its influence on family life today, the pastor and his church must give much more serious attention to instructing young people for marriage. Activities suggested for the pre-marital counselling sessions are designed to help a couple come to a fuller realization of the meaning of, responsibilities for, and activities which will result in a successful marriage and a happy home.

Three possible positions which a pastor may take regarding whom he will marry are:

1. Refuse to marry d _____ and non-C _____.
2. To marry divorcees and non-Christians gives opportunity for a s _____ ministry.
3. Require ample opportunity for c _____ and thus seek to minister spiritually before the ceremony.

(1. divorcees, non-Christians; 2. spiritual; 3. counselling)

The church may determine whom the pastor marries by making such requirements as--

1. They must be b _____ in Christ.
2. They must participate in specified training or c _____ sessions.

(1. believers, 2. counselling)

The Pre-Counseling Contact¹

The pastor and church may adopt a policy that the pastor will not perform wedding ceremonies without extensive pre-marital training sessions to prepare the couple for marriage. As many as five or six sessions of one hour each may be required. In addition, the couple should be given home assignments in the form of books to read, essays to write, questions to be answered, and Scriptures to be studied. Since counseling sessions have been neglected in the past, there may be some resistance to these requirements at first. The pastor may point out that marriage is a lifetime commitment and should not be entered without preparation. Most divorces result from inadequate preparation for, understanding of, and commitment to marriage.

The pastor should set forth the purposes to be achieved during the counselling sessions. The first purpose is to get acquainted and establish lines of communication. The conversation will be frank and personal. There should be an understanding that no significant area of relationship will be excluded. A second purpose is to understand the nature of and the biblical standards and requirements for marriage. A third purpose is to help the couple grow spiritually and to establish a good spiritual foundation for their home. A fourth purpose is to impart information concerning the important areas of adjustment. The couple needs to have an understanding of sex, handling finances, settling disagreements, raising children, and relating to in-laws.

The pastor may agree during the initial contact to place a tentative date on his and the church's calendar for the wedding. The date will not become firm until the counselling sessions are almost finished and both the pastor and the couple have evaluated the possibilities of success for the marriage.

The pastor may want to indicate briefly the nature and content of the counselling sessions.

Session 1: Getting acquainted—background and spiritual experience.

Session 2: Spiritual growth—personal spiritual experience, how to grow, and spiritual foundations for the home.

Session 3: Personal inventory and relating as companions (separate conferences).

Session 4: Areas of adjustment—budget planning, economic and home responsibilities, authority and democracy.

¹H. Norman Wright has written an excellent book entitled Premarital Counseling. The content amplifies greatly the outline and suggestions on the following pages. His book should be studied by pastors who desire fuller preparation in this area.

Counselling sessions should—

1. establish lines of c _____
2. set forth the nature of and biblical s _____ and r _____
for marriage
3. help the couple grow s _____
and establish a good spiritual f _____
for their home
4. impart information concerning areas of a _____

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Finish reading this paragraph which continues on the next page. Then do the following exercise.

Give the suggested theme for each of the six counselling sessions.

Session 1 _____

Session 2 _____

Session 3 _____

Session 4 _____

Session 5 _____

Session 6 _____

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Session 5: Understanding the nature and purpose of physical relations.

Session 6: Solving potential problems and planning the ceremony.

Some couples will decide to seek a marriage officer somewhere else. Other couples will begin the counselling but may not complete it. Some may decide not to marry. But those who complete the counselling sessions will stand a better chance of their marriages succeeding.

Session I: Getting Acquainted

Ideally the couple should contact the pastor four to six months before the planned wedding date in order to make a tentative appointment for the pastor's services and the use of the church building. When the contact is made, the pastor may tentatively schedule the wedding, inform the couple of his requirements for a certain number of counselling sessions, and make an appointment for the first session. Each of these sessions will be about an hour in length. Although the approach may vary with different pastors, the following topics suggest some of the areas which need to be included.

Learning about their backgrounds

To establish rapport, the pastor may share his background and some of his own experiences in marriage. Next he should lead the couple to share information about themselves. He may ask the woman to tell about her home and family, where she lived, and something about her brothers and sisters. Then, he may inquire about her parents—whether they are still alive and living together, their occupations, their financial status, how much they have moved around, and the woman's relation to them. The woman is then asked to tell how her father and mother related to her and which of them she admires the most. Much is revealed in her attitude towards her parents and her concept of how they treated her physically and mentally. She could be led to express her feelings concerning her parents' control of her activities and contribution towards her spiritual life. She may be asked to describe how her parents handle disagreements and what problems cause the most frequent and serious disagreements.

After giving the woman opportunity to share about her home and family, then the man is asked to do the same. The counsellor should be especially interested in knowing the man's attitude towards his mother and father, his financial background, his religious background, and the degree of his commitment to Christ. The pastor should take note of the educational background of both the woman and the man and may inquire about their vocational plans.

Read all of the topic Learning about their backgrounds. Then list some facts about the couple's backgrounds which should be noted.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

During the conversation, the pastor should have an understanding with the couple that nothing will be barred from discussion and anything that is said will be held in strictest confidence. If the couple is hesitant to discuss matters with one another, they should be reminded that marriage involves such an intimate relationship that there will be no secrets. The couple will eventually come to understand the deepest attitudes and feelings of one another, and if some of these feelings are objectional, they should be discovered and dealt with before marriage.

Learning about their relationship

The couple may be asked how long they have known each other, how long they have been dating, how they met, and what they have done together. They may be encouraged to share some of their disagreements and how they have handled them and to discuss some of the undesirable moods which have strained their relationship. They may be asked how well they know each other's parents.

The pastor next should find out more about their physical relationship. He may state that most couples desire to express their affection in some physical manner, and there is the need to discuss how the couple have expressed their affection to one another. He may ask them if their relationship could be described as light petting, heavy petting, sexual intimacy, or spending nights with each other. After they have indicated the degree of physical relationship, he may then ask them to express feelings that they have had about the extent of their physical relationships, such as disagreements over it, guilt, or a feeling of blame towards the other person. If they have been having sexual relations before marriage, their reason for marriage may be that it is necessary because of pregnancy or their attraction may be simply physical. They should be requested to stop having these relations in order to determine whether their interest in one another is strictly physical or not. They should be referred to Scripture which condemns fornication.

Exploring their understanding of marriage

A couple may be asked why they have chosen to come to the minister in a church for marriage rather than approaching a marriage officer of the government. Next, they may be given pencil and paper and asked to write out their definition of marriage and answers to the following questions: What actually constitutes getting married? How are relations different from those during engagement? How are God and society involved in the marriage?

The pastor will be interested in knowing what preparation they have had for marriage. Have they read books or taken courses in school? Who has influenced their attitude towards marriage, and has this influence been good or bad? Fighting families, illegitimacy, and divorced parents may have created a bad

List some questions that may be asked in learning about a couple's relationship.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Give some questions that may be asked and an activity which may be used in helping a couple to explore their understanding of marriage.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

image of marriage. Since emotional problems may exist because of childhood experiences, the couple may be asked whether or not they have suffered sexual abuse as children. If so, they should be encouraged to express their feelings about it.

Learning about their faith

Before the first session concludes, the pastor should invite each to tell about his spiritual experiences and growth. Both may be asked about their salvation experience, their belief about Jesus Christ and God, and whether or not they pray and read their Bibles. The pastor should be interested in determining the degree of conviction on the part of each. Since the man should be leader of the home, conflicts may arise if he has little spiritual interest while the woman has strong beliefs and convictions. If one is a believer and the other is not, the counsellor should explain how important spiritual harmony is to marriage and present the gospel to the unbeliever if there is indication of spiritual interest. If the non-Christian is not interested, the pastor may point out that Christians are not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers. A book on salvation may be given to the unbeliever and the counsellor may assure him that he will be praying for his salvation.

Assignments

The couple may be assigned certain Scriptures and questions to guide them in their study in preparation for the next session.

- I. The nature of marriage (Gen. 2:18-25; Matt. 19:1-10)
 1. Who designed marriage, and why?
 2. What should be the relation of husband and wife according to these teachings?
 3. What changes in priority relationships are required when a man and woman marry?
 4. What is God's plan for the duration of marriage?
 5. Why are divorce and remarriage serious steps?
- II. The advisability of marriage (1 Cor. 7:1-17; 25-40)
 1. Why did Paul not recommend marriage? (Notice that in this chapter he indicated part of the advice was his own opinion rather than revelation from God.)
 2. Under what conditions did Paul recommend marriage?
 3. What does Paul's reference to a believer's separating from an unbeliever imply about the marriage?
 4. What requirement did Paul make for widows who remarry?

The couple may be asked to answer individually some questions in writing and bring them to the third

Why is spiritual harmony important in a marriage? _____

(Compare your answer with the text.)

Now that you have finished reading some suggested areas of pursuit and discussion for the first session in pre-marital counselling, state in your own words what you think should be the purpose of this session.

session. They should be assured that their answers will be kept in confidence.

1. Why do you wish to marry this person? (Give ten or more reasons.)
2. What do you think you can offer this person as a companion?
3. What evidences are there that you love this particular individual?
4. What do you understand love to be?
5. In what way do you expect this marriage to meet the following needs: physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization?
6. What goals do you expect this marriage to accomplish, or what dreams do you have for this marriage?
7. What do you expect to get out of this marriage that you would not have gotten if you had remained single?

Each may be asked to write a brief essay on what he hopes to contribute to the marriage and what he hopes his companion will contribute.

Session II: Spiritual Growth

The counsellor may give opportunity for any questions or responses concerning matters discussed during the first session. He may then review their scripture study on the nature and purpose of the home. During this interview, he should determine if each has understood the biblical standards for marriage and has developed the attitude that marriage is to be permanent.

If both are professing Christians, the counsellor should pursue with them their plans concerning church membership and future service. He may explain that the home will only be as strong as its spiritual foundations, and the spiritual foundations are determined by personal dedication. Problems arise in family and community relationships when sinful attitudes dominate behaviour. The counsellor should review with the couple the source of sinful attitudes and what to do about them. He may then emphasize the importance of demonstrating Christian attitudes in the home relationships.

- I. The Christian's problem with sin (1 John 1:6-9; 1 Cor. 2:15-3:5; Rom. 7:14-25)
 1. If a person claims never to do wrong, he deceives himself.
 2. The solution to wrongs committed is not to deny them or blame others but to confess them.
 3. The sin principle (pride and selfish nature) exists in every person and is described as flesh or carnality.
 4. The fleshly or carnal nature often causes a person to do the things that he knows he should not do.

List two purposes of the scripture study on the nature and purpose of the home.

1. _____
2. _____

(1. to understand the biblical standards for marriage; 2. to develop the attitude that marriage is to be permanent)

Some other areas of spiritual growth that could be dealt with are:

- _____
- _____

(Compare your answers with the text.)

5. What happens when a person walks according to his own desires rather than in love and under the leadership of the Spirit? (Gal. 5:17-21)

II. Successful relationships (Rom. 8:1-10; Gal. 5:22-26)

1. Explain that selfishness and pride lead to strained relations, but consideration and love enhance those relationships. If a person follows his own lustful desires, he will take advantage of his companion and others.
2. Explain that the Spirit of God enables one to apply Christian principles to his family life. The Spirit is God's power abiding within to produce the fruit of love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance.
3. Show how one walks in the Spirit daily by inviting the Spirit to control his life. Before the Spirit is able to control one's life, there must be cleansing through confession of sins.
4. Encourage the couple to have daily devotions in which they study their Bibles and pray for forgiveness and God's indwelling presence and control.

III. The nature of love (1 John 4:7-11; 1 Cor. 13)

1. The nature of love is a deep concern and commitment to meeting the needs of the other person rather than oneself. Love may be defined as a concern that leads to sacrificial giving even as God gave His own Son out of concern for our sins.
2. Have the couple list the qualities of love mentioned in 1 Corinthians 13.²

The counsellor may suggest devotional books, scripture references which promise God answers prayer,

List three areas of spiritual growth and scripture references which are suggested for pre-marital counselling.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Be sure to read and study these Scriptures for yourself.

(Compare your answers with the text. The first area is on the preceding page.)

²Campus Crusade's materials will be helpful in spiritual growth. Use "The Four Spiritual Laws" in counselling non-Christians and "Have you Made the Wonderful Discovery of the Spirit-filled Life?" in showing all Christians how to be controlled by Christ instead of self. The nine booklets on "Transferable Concepts" are excellent for devotional reading and spiritual growth, and "The Ten Basic Steps Towards Christian Maturity" are excellent for further Bible study. These tracts and booklets are available from Campus Crusade, Arrowhead Springs, San Bernardino, CA. 92404. The pastor may require a charge for his counselling service to cover the costs of materials. Since marriage affects the happiness of the rest of one's life, couples should be willing to make some investment of time and money in preparing for it.

and some other material which will help the individuals to grow as Christians.

Assignments

The couple should be reminded that the home assignment made at the end of the first session is due at the beginning of the third session and is not to be shared with each other. The third session will be in separate conferences with each discussing his or her views of themselves and their prospective companion. In preparation for this session, each should write a short essay describing—

1. What I consider to be my own strengths and weaknesses as a companion—personal characteristics that will build up and those that will tend to destroy our marriage.
2. What I consider to be the strengths and weaknesses of the person whom I plan to marry—characteristics that will build up and those that will tend to destroy our marriage.
3. My concept of my role as husband/wife and my concept of my companion's role as wife/husband.
4. Characteristics of my companion that I would like to change.

The content of these essays will be held in confidence.

If books are available, both may be asked to read Communication: Key to Your Marriage by H. Norman Wright, or the woman may be asked to read Woman—Aware and Choosing by Betty J. Coble, and the man What Wives Wish Their Husbands Knew About Women by James Dobson.³ Also recommended are tapes entitled "God's Order for Wives" and "God's Order for Husbands" by Larry Christenson.⁴

Session III: Personal Inventory and Relating as Companions

Since this is the first meeting of each without the other partner present, time should be permitted for expression of any personal feelings which were suppressed in the presence of the other. A person may not feel free to talk about the other until well into the session. The counsellor may recall some of the questions of the first session which the person was hesitant to discuss in the presence of the other. Adequate time should be allowed to discuss any problems that the person anticipates in marriage.

³Wright's book may be ordered from Regal Books, 110 W. Broadway, Glendale, Calif. 91204. Coble's book is available from Broadman Press, 127 Ninth Ave. North, Nashville, Tenn. 37234. Dobson's book is available from Tyndale House Publishers, 336 Gundersen Dr., Wheaton, Ill. 60187.

⁴Christenson's tapes are available from Bethany Fellowship, Box 179, St. Louis, Missouri 63166.

In preparation for the third session, it is suggested that each person write a short essay dealing with the following areas:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

It is suggested that the third session be given to separate conferences with each partner.

Give some advantages of this private conference. _____

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Discuss the self-evaluation and partner evaluation of the one present only. This review should reveal any possible areas of tension and should suggest the most critical areas of adjustment. Review the person's concept of the role of husband and wife. The purpose of this exercise is to determine if there are dangerous divergencies between the concepts of the two and to help each define what he or she expects of the other.

The information revealed during this session must be kept in strict confidence, and the person must be able to trust the confidence of the counsellor. His purpose is not to point out to each potential problem areas which are revealed since that might lead to loss of respect and open conflict. However, the counsellor's knowledge of problem areas will help him to plan for the next session in which adjustments will be discussed. His desire should be to help each person to evaluate candidly his companion and himself. Later, when both are together again, the counsellor might bring up the areas where concepts might be in conflict, but he must not reveal what the other person has said.

During the individual conferences, the counsellor may inquire what is his or her parents' opinion of the future mate. Then the counsellor may ask what he or she believes to be the attitude of the future mate's parents towards him. This discussion should reveal what kind of emphasis will be needed in the next session on areas of adjustment. One of the areas involves relating to in-laws. Perhaps neither the man nor woman has taken time to get acquainted with the future mate's parents. Most in-laws are interested in the welfare of their children's mates, and sometimes this interest may cause them to appear to interfere.

Assignment

Since the next session will focus on areas of adjustment, the assignments will have to do with relationships within the home. Each partner should be instructed to work up a tentative budget and explain how he or she expects the money to be handled and spent. In addition, scripture study is assigned to provide a foundation for relations within the home.

- I. The relation of husband and wife (Eph. 5:21-33)
 1. What does Paul say is the proper relationship of the wife to the husband and the husband to the wife? Define the meaning of the relationships.
 2. What does Paul indicate is the role of the husband and the wife in the home?
 3. What is the husband's primary responsibility in marriage? The wife's?
- II. The relation of parents and children (Eph. 6:1-4; 2 Tim. 1:15; Luke 11:11-13)

The reasons for discussing the self-evaluation and partner evaluation with each are:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

(Compare your answers with the text.)

According to the suggested Bible study assignment in preparation for the fourth session, what two primary relationships exist in the home? Give scripture references for each.

1. _____
2. _____

Be sure to study these Scriptures for yourself.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

1. What is the proper attitude of children towards their parents?
2. What is the responsibility of parents to children?
3. What responsibility does a child have towards his parents? (See also Mark 7:10-13.)

Session IV: Areas of Adjustment

Separate conferences have been conducted with each, and the counsellor has in hand their self-evaluations, concepts of one another, role concepts, and goals for their marriage. From these, the counsellor should be able to determine the areas which need further exploration and discussion.

He may invite each one once again to define his concept of the role of husband and wife and to name the personal characteristics which he feels might tend to break down the marriage. The counsellor should avoid encouraging either partner to point out the weaknesses of the other. He should not suppress a discussion if those being counselled choose to bring the matter up themselves.

Next, each partner might be invited to read his essay on what he hopes to contribute to the marriage and what he thinks his companion will contribute. The sharing of these concepts will help couples to see the areas of adjustment that need to be made.

Responsibilities within and outside the home

Their concepts of the role of husband and of wife should indicate what each considers his responsibility and that of his mate to be. Further discussion of the subject, however, enables agreement to be reached on any divergent point. If the husband expects his wife to be housekeeper and cook primarily, then he should expect to provide for the economic needs of the home. If the wife is expected to work and contribute to economic support, then the husband should assume responsibilities within the home.

Work and vocation

By this time, the couple should have agreed on whether or not the wife plans to work after marriage. Also, the husband should have made plans concerning his career and the wife should be in agreement with his plans. If a son plans a business career with his father, the future wife should have a clear understanding of the agreement between her husband and his father.

Finances and money management

The counsellor should ask for the budget from each of the counselees which was assigned for them to prepare. The budgets will reflect the concepts of each in handling funds. If significant divergencies appear,

A couple's concepts of the role of husband and wife will indicate what each considers his r _____ and that of his m _____ to be.

(responsibility, mate)

Before marriage, a couple should have agreed on two matters concerning work and vocation:

1. whether the wife will _____ outside the home

2. What the husband's plans are concerning a _____

(1. work, 2. career)

they need to recognize them and reach a common agreement. They should be encouraged to plan carefully the spending of their money, the setting of financial goals, their savings, and provision for unexpected expenses. Gifts to the church, rent, automobile expense, food and clothing, and recreation should be included in the budget. They should be encouraged not to become heavily indebted since undue financial burdens can place strains upon their relationship.

In-laws

The possible problems which might arise in relationships with in-laws have already been discussed briefly with each individual. The man needs to recognize that in marriage his first responsibility is to his wife rather than to his mother or father. The man should continue to respect his parents, but he is to leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife. The woman should see that her parents do not interfere with the marriage. Although both the man and the woman can possibly see weaknesses of the future in-laws, they should be careful not to criticize one another's parents. On the other hand, if the in-laws tend to create problems, the couple should agree together to move far enough away in order to reduce the conflict; otherwise, serious problems can arise which will hinder the relationship of the couple.

The birth of children

By this time, perhaps the man and woman have already discussed the number of children they desire and the time when they plan for them. Children's coming too close together is detrimental to the woman's health. At least two years should elapse between the birth of each child. The number of children should be determined by the desires of the parents and their ability to support them. Not only should parents plan to feed and clothe adequately their children, but they should plan to give them as much education as possible. Innocent children of irresponsible parents suffer the consequences if so many are born into the family that all cannot be properly cared for and educated.

Medical examinations and marital laws

Some countries require a blood test before a marriage license is issued. The wise couple seeks a complete medical examination before marriage. The bride should see a gynecologist and be thoroughly examined for her forthcoming experiences as a wife and as a mother. The doctor can explain birth control to her and inform her of any disorders that may prevent or make difficult her having children. The husband should be examined by a specialist in internal medicine to determine if any disorders may interfere with his capacity to work or function as a husband and father. The counsellor should encourage each to have a medical examination.

Why is it wise for a couple not to become heavily indebted?

(Compare your answer with the text.)

In relating to in-laws, to whom is a couple primarily responsible? _____

(each other)

Give two factors which should determine the number of children a couple should have.

1. _____
2. _____

- 1. the desires or wishes of the parents,*
- 2. their ability to support the children)*

The legal laws or requirements for marriage should be discussed as well as the advisability of a couple's getting complete medical e _____ before m _____.

(examinations, marriage)

Each government has laws relating to marriage. The pastor as marriage officer and the couple should be informed concerning the legal requirements for marriage. Also they need to learn about laws regarding joint bank accounts, joint ownership of property, the need for a will, and other legal matters. The pastor as counsellor should be informed on these matters and should share information with the couple.

Assignment

Since the next session is devoted to an understanding of physical relations, the reading assignments should centre on that subject. Each partner is asked to read either Intended for Pleasure by Ed and Gail Wheat or Sexual Happiness in Marriage by Herbert J. Miles.⁵ If time does not permit the couple to read an entire book before the following session, they should read the sections dealing with reproductive and sexual organs and sexual adjustments in marriage.

Session V: Understanding the Nature and Purpose of Physical Relations

The couple may come to the session with the attitude that they already understand everything about sexual relations, especially if they have had previous experience. It is likely that the man and woman do not fully understand one another and will have to adjust in their physical relationships. The pastor may want to purchase a set of tapes entitled "Sex Problems and Sex Techniques in Marriage" by Dr. Ed Wheat.⁶ These tapes record a medical doctor's explanations and instructions concerning sexual adjustments in marriage. The counsellor may invite the couple to listen to the tapes and then discuss any areas which they do not fully understand. If the tapes are not available, the counsellor may introduce a discussion of their reading by asking, "What do you think of the material you are reading?"

Other books may be helpful in presenting the delicate subject: The Key to Feminine Response in Marriage by Ronald Deutsch, The Joy of Being a Woman by Ingrid Trobisch, Sex Without Fear by S. A. Lewin and John Gilmore, The Act of Marriage by Tim and Beverly LaHaye.⁷

⁵Wheat's book is available from Fleming H. Revell Co., Old Tappan, New Jersey 07675. Miles' book is available from Zondervan Publishing House, 1415 Lake Drive, S. E., Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506.

⁶These tapes may be ordered from Christian Marriage Enrichment, 800 E. Girard, Denver, Colorado 80231.

⁷Deutsch's book is available from Ballantine Books, Inc., 101 Fifth Ave., N. Y. 10003; Trobisch's from Harper & Row, 10 E. 53rd St., N. Y. 10022; Lewin and Gilmore's from Medical Research Press, 186 Fifth Ave., N. Y. 10010; and LaHaye's from Zondervan (see footnote 5).

Now that you have read about some suggestions for the session on areas of adjustment, name some of the matters that should be discussed.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Two means of introducing the need for adjustment in physical relations are:

1. _____
2. _____

(1. tapes, 2. books)

List one suggested title for each.

1. tape - _____
2. book - _____

(Compare your answers with the text.)

The counsellor may find helpful "The Sex Knowledge Inventory Test, Form X and Form Y."⁸ Form X of this test deals with technical subjects such as anatomy, physiology, and contraception. In the counselling process, form Y may be helpful with questions which are broader in scope and which reflect some of the individual's attitudes.

The instruction on the physical relationship in marriage should include an understanding of the anatomy of both man and woman, their emotional needs and responses, conception and birth control, and an evaluation to determine if any emotional disturbances will prevent satisfactory sexual adjustments. Much of the information can be communicated through reading material; however, the counsellor should be well informed on the subject in order to be able to answer questions that may arise. Much less is understood about physical relations than most people will admit. Often, poor adjustments are made in marriage and tensions arise because of unsatisfactory physical relations.

Assignment

The couple will be encouraged to complete the reading material which has been given during previous sessions.

Session VI: Solving Potential Problems and Planning the Ceremony

Sharing life together

The partners may be faced with the question of whether they plan to change certain characteristics of their mates after marriage. They should realize, however, that they cannot be assured that any changes will be brought about. The counsellor may lead them in a discussion of areas of compatibility and help them to define the activities they plan to share together and those which they desire to do separately.

Review of reading material

The couple should be given opportunity to evaluate the material they have been reading. Perhaps they would want to comment on methods of showing affection to one another, the sensitivity of the husband to the wife, and adjustments during the honeymoon.

The partners need to recognize that controversy cannot be avoided. They must face it and learn how to work through their difficulties. The attitude of each partner is very important during controversies. They arise because of self-interest. They are solved by

List some areas of the physical relationship in marriage which need to be understood.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Are these statements true or false?

1. *A couple can expect to change the undesirable characteristics of the other after marriage.* _____
2. *While a couple will share in most activities, there will be others which they may desire to do separately.* _____

(1. false, 2. true)

There will be controversy in marriage. What is the solution to this fact?

1. _____
2. _____

(1. face it; 2. learn to work through the controversy)

⁸Available from Family Life Publications, Inc., Box 6725, College Station, Durham, North Carolina.

consideration and concern (love) for the well-being of the partner and by a recognition that one is biased by his self-interest. Both partners must assume the same attitude and be willing to cooperate. Otherwise, one will take advantage of the other.

Incidental matters

The couple should be given opportunity to review any of the areas discussed, and time should be given to any questions which they still have. By this stage of the counselling session, each should be comfortable in discussing matters freely with his partner and with the counsellor. The counsellor may feel that some areas need further elaboration.

Planning the wedding ceremony

The wedding is a significant event of lifelong consequence to the couple. The wife is usually given the privilege of planning the details of the wedding ceremony. Usually she will need some counsel and guidance. The counsellor should be acquainted with marriage customs in his culture and should be available to make suggestions if he is called upon.⁹ The pastor as marriage officer should be flexible enough to fit into the plans of the couple concerning the ceremony. However, he should reserve the right to assure that the ceremony honours Christ. Marriage is not just a relationship between a couple but is to be according to the will of God. A successful marriage must be based upon divine will; therefore, the ceremony should reflect God's purpose and plan for marriage.

Finish reading the text on this page, then list some suggested areas of discussion for the last counselling session.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

The choice of the type wedding ceremony is the prerogative of the couple. However, it is the minister's responsibility to assure that the ceremony honours _____ because marriage is to be according to _____ will.

(Christ, God's)

⁹See the study guide entitled The Pastor's Personal Life and Duties, by Weldon E. Viertel, for a discussion of the wedding.

Home Study Exercise

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

1. State four purposes of pre-marital counselling. _____

2. List three positions a pastor may take regarding whom he will marry. _____

3. How can the church help the pastor determine whom he should marry? _____

4. List the theme and purpose to be accomplished in each of five pre-marital counselling sessions. _____

5. List four areas that will be discussed in getting acquainted, and suggest two or three questions under each to guide the discussion. _____

6. Suggest two assignments to give couples in preparation for the second and third sessions. _____

7. Suggest three biblical subjects to discuss during the second session on spiritual growth. _____

8. Name four aspects which a short essay should include in preparation for the third session. _____

9. Why should the self-evaluation and partner evaluation be discussed with each? _____

10. Suggest two biblical subjects relating to the home to be studied in preparation for the fourth session. _____
11. List six subjects that may be discussed during the fourth session. _____

12. Suggest two ways the pastor may guide the couple to a better understanding of physical relations in marriage. _____

13. Suggest four areas in which instruction is needed regarding physical relationships. _____

14. Suggest three subjects that may be discussed during the last session. _____

Supplementary activity (Levels 2 and 3).

Read pages 28-33, 340-343, and 350-354 in The Marriage Affair, edited by J. Allan Petersen, and answer the following questions.

1. According to Paul Tournier, what are two areas of fear that hinder communications between husbands and wives?
2. From the article entitled "Diplomacy at Home," what should be the minimum requirements for diplomacy in the family? How can a family enforce diplomacy?
3. According to Clark Ellzey, what are the causes of money troubles in marriage?

Advanced activity (Level 3).

Read pages 336-339, 355-358, and 359-363 in The Marriage Affair, and answer the following questions.

1. According to Nelson, what is required for effective communication in marriage?
2. According to Kehl, why is it important for a Christian to have a will?
3. Explain George Bowman's "ten-seventy-twenty" formula for wealth.

Seminar Discussion

1. What contribution can pre-marital counselling make towards solving the crisis of deteriorating family life?
2. What should be the goals of the pastor in planning for the first pre-marital counselling session?
3. Why should spiritual growth be a part of the pre-marital counselling programme?
4. Why should separate sessions be held with the prospective bride and groom?
5. In what areas of adjustment are couples likely to have less understanding?
6. How important is communication between a couple in making their marriage adjustments?