

Developing Marital Intimacy

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Introduction.

- A. Marriage today is like fly on a window pane; those out want in and those in want out.
- B. Marriages may be hazardous to your health.
- C. Marriage has never been more popular, never more perverted.
- D. A fictional page from 2010 defines marriage as obsolete.
 - 1. Marriage was practiced from prehistoric times till just recently.
 - 2 It occurs now only among primitive culture or religious sub groups.
 - 3. This is a prophecy of social scientists.
- E. Zane Peterson studied couples of 15 to 45 years and could not find 6 of 100 who were fulfilled in the relationship.
- F. If you think I'm talking of the non-Christian world I'm not, as marriages inside the church and outside the church are similar.
 - 1. Pastors spend 65% of counseling time on marriages.
 - 2. This society has not devised a way for couples to live together for 6 straight days without difficult.
 - 3. Getting married is easy; building a marriage is difficult.
 - 4. Nothing is more determinative than your marriage; it will make or break your ministry.
 - 5. It is your greatest asset or your greatest liability.
 - 6. Businesses have determined that intact marriages contribute more to stability in the work place than any other single thing.
- G. The Navigators represent one of the most significant organizations for Christ and I am concerned about your marriages.
 - 1. Missionaries tell us that the greatest impact on a pagan culture is the distinctively Christian home.
 - 2. As our culture becomes more pagan our marriages become more distinctive.
 - 3. That all marriages are either good or bad is far from the truth.

4. All marriages have strengths and weaknesses.
5. All marriages are dynamic or else they deteriorate.

H. Marriage definitions.

1. Some define a good marriage as one in which there are no serious problems.
 - a. This is a lie.
 - b. All marriages have problems because they deal with people.
 - c. Marriages are dynamic or they are dead.
2. Some define a bad marriage in which they are working on the relationship.
 - a. If counseling is involved it is a scandal.
 - b. If a couple asks for prayer concerning their marriage it gets into the evangelical grapevine.
 - c. We all need prayer for God to enrich our marriages.
 - d. If you fail to cultivate your marriage it will turn to death.

I. Why marriages succeed is a difficult subject.

J. Many feel there must be more than what they are experiencing.

K. Today I want to be diagnostic and remedial.

I. Diagnostic: What's wrong with Christian marriages; Remedial: What can be done to improve Christian marriages?

A. What's wrong with Christian marriages? Three things are wrong.

1. We are failing in marriage because of improper choices.
 - a. Superficial reality and lack of proper exposure leads to poor decisions.
 - b. There is no intelligent choice without adequate exposure to the opposite sex.
 - c. Christians need to know each other before marrying.
 - d. Two areas reveal the problem.
 1. We teach not to marry a non-Christian; we also need to teach that some Christians are not good partners for you.
 2. We put pressure on people to marry.

2. Unrealistic expectations cause problems.

- a. The average person going into marriage doesn't understand love.
- b. Most marrying couples are in lust.
- c. If you marry a body every year deteriorates the marriage.
- d. Many marry expecting their couple to do what only God can do.
- e. Finding the right person is not as important as being the right person.
 - 1. One student had a three page type written page of qualifications.
 - 2. Yet few of those qualifications were true of his life.

3. Inadequate preparations cause problems.

- a. It's easier to get married than it is to become a garbage collector.
- b. We spend more time preparing for the wedding than we do for the marriage.
- c. I watched a documentary on contemporary marriage and not one positive model was interviewed.
- d. The average person doesn't understand right from perverted behavior.
- e. Many pagan people come out of unrighteous life styles and carry much baggage into a marriage.

B. How can we improve our marriages?

1. Intimacy develops when a couple develops an effective communication system with four components.

- a. Talking; many couples avoid hot areas like finances.
- b. Listening; we need to pray for the gift of silence.
- c. Understanding; a meeting of meaning, not what they say but what they mean by what they say.
- d. Desire to communicate; when one or both loses desire to communicate the marriage will suffer. (James 1:19)
 - 1. Apologizing is important.
 - 2. Forgiving is important.
 - 3. We have one mouth and two ears.

4. Communication in a marriage by words only 7%.
 5. Tone of voice communicates 38%.
 6. Facial expression and body movement communicates 55%.
 7. Relationships are more important than roles and rules.
 8. My home was immaculate yet my wife's home was not. I had significant adjustment to make, especially when the kids came.
 - i. Cleanliness is not as important as relationship.
 - ii. I learned this from my wife.
 9. Many women function well as mothers but not as wives.
2. Intimacy develops when a couple is willing to run the risk of greater openness.
- a. Good marriage partners know each other well.
 - b. Open and realistic communication is essential.
 - c. We need to become masters of our mates.
 - d. My parents separated and I never saw them together except in divorce court, and I did not shed the baggage of depression for years, though I ministered well.
 1. I would avoid my wife and refuse help, yet she understood me.
 2. Sometimes even my kids would ask me to read the Bible to them in order to get me out of depression.
 3. Our willingness to admit our faults is crucial to openness.
 4. When my child went to college he wrote me a letter stating that in spite of seeing my problem he still had great respect for me.
 5. Don't let the devil wipe you out. We all have baggage and God is able to bring us through our troubles.
3. Intimacy develops when couples are willing to evaluate their marriages.
- a. Howard and Charlotte Toynbell wrote a profound book, *Intimacy in Marriage* that I recommend.
 1. It has an evaluation instrument with twelve areas.
 2. Don't play games but be realistic.

3. You fill out one side of this evaluation and have your partner fill out the other.
 - i. How would you each rate your partner's sexuality?
 - ii. Don't be surprised if your partner rates you low.
 - iii. It gives a realistic ground for improvement.
 - iv. Always go for improvement.
4. You also answer questions to see how your mate is thinking.
 - i. This gets people to open up.
 - ii. This generates discussion.
 - iii. Disclosure develops further disclosure.
5. I recommend setting up a husband wife retreat each year for just the two of you.