

## **Marriage and Families**

### **Lesson 7 – A Successful Marriage**

While family still is important in our society, marriage isn't --at least as much as it once was. According to Wm. J. Bennett in his 1994 best-selling book, **Index of Leading Cultural Indicators**, more than 2.9 million [American] households are composed of unmarried couples, an increase of 80 percent over that of 1980.

A man, being asked what he attributed the success of his marriage to, replied, "Lots of fresh air and sunshine." When asked to explain, he said, "When my wife gets angry with me and begins shouting at me, I just get my hat and go for a walk --and I've spent a lot of time outdoors."

There is much value to be gained from marriages being successful. The lives of the partners in such a marriage will be deeply enriched. They will reach emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual levels, which they very likely would not reach otherwise. When the lives of the mother and father in the home are enriched, the lives of the children in that home are also enriched.

The 127th Psalm begins, "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it." It is God's will for our homes to be successful. And since marriage is a divine institution, we would expect the Word of God to give us instruction and guidance, which, if followed, would inevitably bring success and happiness to us. We have seen through our previous studies, that, indeed, is the case.

Marriage is such a sacred union it's used many times in the Scriptures to describe that high and holy relationship between Christ and His church.

- The husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church.
- As the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.
- Husbands are to love their wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it. So ought men to love their own wives.
- Husbands ought to nourish and cherish their wives just like Christ loves and cherishes the church.
- Men ought to leave their fathers and mothers and cleave to their wives.
- Wives are to respect their husbands.

What from our previous lessons can we apply in understanding how to have a successful marriage?

1. Christian character is the true basis for a successful marriage.
  - 1.1. You cannot build a successful marriage by choosing a partner that is of poor character.

- 1.2. Each person taking the wedding vows should recognize the purity of mind and purity of body that they should bring to the marriage. There is no double standard for morality. (**I Corinthians 3:17**)
- 1.3. Preserve your good name by only associating with those of good character and who have high spiritual levels. (**I Corinthians 15:33**)
2. Commit to marriage the Lord's way.
  - 2.1. Marriage is more a spiritual than physical relationship (**Ephesians 5:22-28**). The spiritual relationship that you have with Christ will have a direct bearing on the spiritual relationship between the marriage partners. When two people love the Lord, the closer each of them gets to the Lord, the closer they get to each other, and He becomes the chord that binds them together for life. Come what may - sickness, hard times, personal differences, tragedy, hardship, whatever - two such people become inseparable because of Him. **Amos 3:3** asks, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" The answer is obvious. How can two people live together a lifetime except they are agreed on the most important issue of life? They're both committed to doing what the Lord teaches.
  - 2.2. Worship and serve God faithfully. "Heirs together of the grace of life," **I Peter 3:7**.
  - 2.3. Divorce rate is considerably higher for those who have not centered their life on the Lord's way.
  - 2.4. Religiously mixed marriages are dangerous. The training up of children can become a source of great strife and conflict. Does the Christian partner compromise their beliefs to attend services with their partner? Despite the fact that many couples have agreed that a difference in religious faith won't be a problem in their marriage, it's a statistical fact that it's one of the leading causes of trouble after the wedding
  - 2.5. Marriage to an unbeliever can bring great heartache and pain. It becomes clear from I Corinthians 7:12-14 that those in this type of marriage are to stay with their spouse except when there is adultery by your partner, or your faithfulness to Christ becomes impossible.
    - 2.5.1. If you are married to a non-Christian, you must be very sure of your faithfulness to Christ. Do NOT compromise your beliefs to please your spouse.
    - 2.5.2. You have the obligation to set the proper example of the Christian life for your partner. (**I Peter 3:1-2**)
3. Commit yourselves to marriage for life.
  - 3.1. There was an article in the May 1989 Reader's Digest, which was a condensed version, of course, of a longer article by Diane Medved, a marriage counselor and psychologist, titled "The Case Against Divorce." In it she says, "The old wedding vows read 'for better for worse, till death us do part.' Today couples commonly say through good times and bad, as long as our love shall last.' Until recently," she said, "I nodded at the 'improvement;' now I soberly acknowledge the wisdom of the past."
  - 3.2. Marriage is for the mature.
    - 3.2.1. Selflessness not selfishness

- 3.2.2. Avoid quarrels or arguing over things that are of no consequence.
- 3.3. Jesus said of the married man and woman, "They are no more two, but one flesh." Godly marriages are built on this commitment to oneness -- togetherness.
  - 3.3.1. Those in successful marriages have learned that after the wedding it's no longer "I" and "me" and "mine" and "I want" and "I won't," but "we" and "us" and "ours," and "We'd like" and "we'll consider it."
  - 3.3.2. Recognize that it is God, not man that instituted marriage.
- 3.4. Avoid situations in which you might be easily tempted.
- 3.5. You should have great expectations for your marriage.
- 4. Recognize the place for true love in marriage. (**I Corinthians 13:4-8**)
  - 4.1. Expect your love for each other to grow!!
  - 4.2. Love causes us to be kind.
  - 4.3. Love causes us to be free from pride and arrogance.
  - 4.4. Do not be boastful.
  - 4.5. Show love and gratitude for the love and devotion shown to you by your spouse.
  - 4.6. Avoid harsh language, ridicule and deceitful remarks. Remember these words, "Angry words, oh let them never, from the tongue unbridled slip".
  - 4.7. Godly marriages are built on a commitment love, honor and cherish so long as you both shall live. So, let your love for your spouse be sincere, not the bedroom kind of love, though that's important to a marriage, but the kind that exhibits itself in patience and kindness and trust and unselfishness that never fails.
  - 4.8. Do not seek happiness at the expense of your partner. Marital happiness comes from seeking to make each other happy.
  - 4.9. Do not be easily angered.
    - 4.9.1. Ref **Ephesians 4:26**
    - 4.9.2. If a man is wise, he will be slow to anger remembering **James 1:19-20**
  - 4.10. Do not keep a ledger of those things that your spouse has done wrong.
  - 4.11. Guard your heart against resentment.
  - 4.12. Be saddened when your partner experiences failures. Do not respond with such comments as, "I told you so" or "I knew that would happen."
  - 4.13. "This love of which I speak is slow to lose patience --it looks for a way of being constructive. It is not possessive: it is neither anxious to impress nor does it cherish inflated ideas of its own importance. Love has good manners and does not pursue selfish advantage. It is not touchy. It does not keep account of evil or gloat over the wickedness of other people. On the contrary, it is glad with all good men when truth prevails. Love knows no limit to its endurance, no end to its trust, no fading of its hope; it can outlast anything. It is, in fact, the one that still stands when all else has fallen." That's I Corinthians 13:4-8 in the Phillips translation. That's the kind of love that grows with the years and binds a husband and

wife together for better, for worse, in sickness and in health, in prosperity and in adversity till death does them part.

5. Learn how to handle your financial affairs properly.
  - 5.1. All of what we have belongs to the Lord, and we must be faithful stewards.
6. Understand the beauty of the physical relationship as God has given it. Do not neglect the responsibility you have to your partner.
7. Continue the courtship after the marriage.
8. Assume your God given role in your marriage.

Lessons 2, 3 and 4 discuss the importance of the marriage vows, the role of the Christian man in marriage and the role of the Christian woman in marriage. Study these lessons faithfully to better understand what God wants you to be. A successful marriage will only occur when the partners are truly committed to working on, studying about and praying for the type of marriage God intends for us to have. It will not just happen.

Marriage affects so many more people than just those two who were joined together. Families, friends, children, and the church will all benefit or are harmed by how seriously you take the commitment of marriage. We have seen that God takes it very seriously.