

CULTIVATING LOVE IN MARRIAGE

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Ecc. 9:9 Enjoy life with the woman whom you love, is is your reward in life...

Marriage is God's idea - For mutual pleasure—enjoyment.

- God designed it so that the spouse may attain the highest level of satisfaction and fulfillment:
- **“Why then are there so many problems in marriages today?”**

Someone said:

“Even if marriages are made in Heaven, man has to be responsible for the maintenance of it.”



STATISTICS- In America

- Each year, 1 million children see their parents divorced...
- Another million children are born outside of marriage...
- Women are more apt to be unhappy in marriage and initiate most divorces.
- Less than 16% of all marriage were preceded by premarital classes.
 - Interviewed divorced people expressed that:
 - Physical abuse broke 5% of marriages
 - Substance abuse (drugs & alcohol) - 16%
 - Infidelity – 17%
 - Poor communication and conflict resolution – 60 %

Songs 8:7 (NIV) Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot wash it away.

1Cor 13:7 (NKJV) [Love] bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Nehemiah 4:14 (NKJV) ... and fight for your brethren, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your houses."

Malachi 2:14 (NKJV) Yet you say, "For what reason?" Because the Lord has been witness Between you and the wife of your youth, With whom you have dealt treacherously; Yet she is your companion And your wife by covenant.

15 But did He not make [them] one, Having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring.

Therefore take heed to your spirit, And let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth.

16 "For the Lord God of Israel says That He hates divorce, For it covers one's garment with violence," Says the Lord of hosts. "Therefore take heed to your spirit, That you do not deal treacherously."

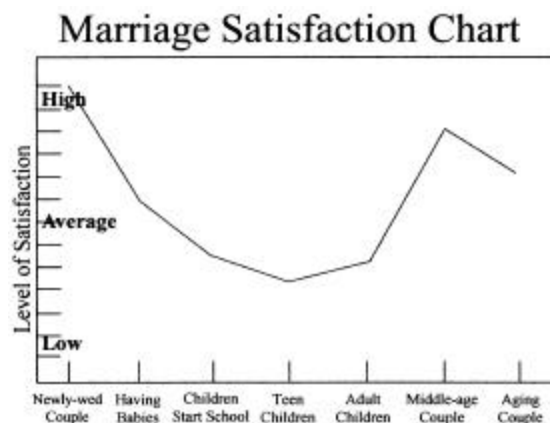
EXPECTATIONS

Most people marry with expectations and dreams of a “living happily ever after” MARRIAGE.

- These expectations come from many sources, including parents, values, society, books, and our own ideas.
- It is important to know if these expectations are realistic and can be achieved.
- Most married people experience disappointments because their expectations, hope and dreams are not realized.
- Many marriages turn into tragedies because both partners are not prepared to handle these disappointments when things do not go according to plans.

Does this chart below resemble our marriage relationship? Why or Why not? And in what aspect?

At what stage is your marriage now?(Newly-wed, having babies, teen?) What is the level of romantic satisfaction you feel you are in right now?



FALSES IDEAS ABOUT MARRIAGES

- 1) **Everything will get better**
- 2) Marriage means:
 - Leaving our family forever.
 - Giving up carefree lifestyle and accepting new limits.
 - Unexpected inconveniences.
 - Sharing life with a stranger who has its own sets of values, habits, preferences, etc.
 - Filled with both enjoyable and not-so enjoyable trade-offs.
 - Some people are quite well adjusted (personality, emotionally), others are not... (Problematic upbringing, family values).
 - Most serious marriage problems arise from problematic personalities.
- 3) **Everything bad in my life will disappear**
 - The bad traits and feelings you carried with you before marriage remain with you after marriage.
 - Marriage is life that continues...
 - Marriage cannot cancel your negatives.

Some characteristics that are appealing during courtship may become problematic later. Take, for example, people who are care free and impulsive. During courtship, this can be enjoyable and appealing. These people are spontaneous, emotionally responsive, and fun. They can bring new life to a too serious dating partner.

But after marriage, when it's time to plan ahead, do the budget, make long-range decisions, or take on the responsibilities of work or parenting, the negative side comes out.

The same trait that once brought joy to the relationship is perceived differently and brings anger and resentment. Before he/she was fun, now he/she is irresponsible.

Remember this: Marriage won't solve your potential problems, and "hoping" won't make them go away. Take a close look before you leap.

The Bible says,

Prov.22:3 (NIV) A prudent man sees danger and takes refuge, but the simple keep going and suffer for it.

How can we be and remain happily married?

After a certain time of being married, many marriage partner becomes confused about the change in the way they feel about their partner, and wonder if they still love their partner. It is a critical time. Be on your guard... They ask themselves questions like:

"I have a strong affection, but I'm not sure if I'm in love. How do I know if it is true love or just a passing emotion?"

A couple were asking if they should have children...

"It feels more like we're good friends than good lovers, are we still in love or not?"

How can we make love last a lifetime?

Stages or phases of love in marriage...

- Does that mean that we should always feel this "ecstatic feeling of love", every minutes or even every day to reassure us that we are happily married?
- We know that the honeymoon ends, and the experience called "Falling in love" passes, but that does not mean that we stop loving our partner.
- When you love someone you do not love him or her all the time in exactly the same way from moment to moment...

ILLUSTRATION

I watched a movie in which a young rich and beautiful lady, fell madly in love with this guy she just met. She announced to her family that she wanted to marry him.

The mother said: "It takes more than love... love is not enough to make a marriage work."

- **Do you agree or not?**

- I think that what she meant was that it takes more than a passionate physical attraction (erotic love) to make a marriage work.
- Marriage needs other ingredients.

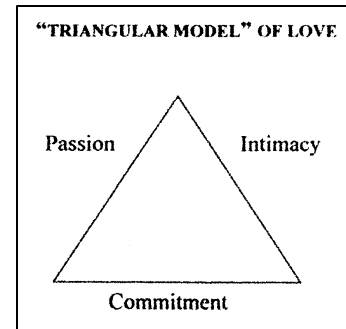
What is Love?

Love is a mixture of elements that has to adapt constantly to changing elements that are sometimes opposite like: Affection & anger, excitement & boredom, stability & change, restriction & freedom.

- The love you have for your partner will go through different phases.
- Love has to evolve from being self-concerned and mature into partner-concerned. – Together fulfilling God’s goal.

“Triangular model” of love

Triangle with three sides: Passion – intimacy – commitment. (See chart)



PASSION: The intense desire for physical affection.

Expressed in the passionate poetry of Song of Songs: “Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth-for your love is more delightful than wine.” S of S 1:2
 On the negative, passion can be possessive and abusive. (Jealousy – obsession – leading to violent behaviour).

“Does love seek only self to please?” William Blakes.

Most Romantic movies end at that stage—Physical attraction, passion... Then what will happen to that couple?

INTIMACY:

“Love without intimacy is only a hormonal illusion.”

You cannot go on desiring a person over a long period of time without knowing that person (discovering, learning).

Intimacy includes: Closeness, affection, sharing, communication, honesty.

Neil Clark: “Lack of intimacy is the number one enemy of marriage.”

- Without knowing each other deeply marriage partners cannot become what the Bible calls “One Flesh”.
- Without intimacy, they will end up feeling isolated & alone, instead of experiencing the comfort of closeness and acceptance.

COMMITMENT: Looks toward an unknown future and promises to be there, to support -- until death.

It creates “security” in an uncertain environment. Like an island in the ocean. [It is the active part – It puts legs under good intentions (love, hope, trust)]

Or is it more like Paul describes in 1Cor. 13:7 “Love bears [protects-roof-covers the errors],(the secrets) all things, believes [trusts] all things, hopes [expects] all things, endures [remains, endures] all things.”

The Marriage vows are a “total, definite, unreserved, unchangeable and personal commitment.”

- Passionate love that begins a marriage cannot sustain a marriage.

Stages of Love:

Each one has its own challenges & provides opportunities to build up each other.



<p>ROMANCE: Enchantment, taking complete delight in each other (celebration of happiness) Prov. 5:18,19 <i>Let your fountain be blessed and rejoice with the wife of your youth.</i> (She gives you joy as your fountain gives you water... 19—She is as lovely & graceful as a deer.) Let her breasts satisfy you at all times and always be “enraptured” with her love “intoxicated”. Let her love always make you happy.</p>	<p>Disenchantment POWER STRUGGLE: Tension begins when the difference of taste & opinions and peculiar behaviour are expressed Each one try to change the other to adopt his own. Upset, hurt, put down, irritated, uncomfortable. We’ll never make it.</p> <p>SOLUTION: Realize your partner is not the perfect partner, but still determine to continue the journey together. Begin to be aware that you don’t depend on your partner to make you happy. At this stage, you begin to find new ability to overcome disappointment. Apply the following verses to your daily marriage relationship, Eph. 4:31 <i>“Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor (loud quarrellings) and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.”</i> Eph. 4:31 <i>“...Passion, rage, bad temper--anger, animosity --loud quarrellings, evil speaking, abusive—baseness of any kind, Never shout angrily or say things to hurt others.</i></p>	<p>Maturity Acceptance of my spouse and willingness to change myself . Look more inwardly my own shortcomings. A willingness to take responsibility for my personal problems. Become more concern of the need of my partner. <i>“How can I make you happy ”</i> <i>“How can I help you”.</i> More able to meet with stressful and difficult times <i>Example of a Couple’s stressful times (Maybe going through the phase of being Concerned with being attractive to partner...or Stressful times with growing children, (Teenager))</i> <i>Let’s work it out. Encourage each other.</i> The couple looks up for each other. They feel a secure sense of belonging. They discover a deeper unity, the joy of being together and are grateful for each other. CO-CREATIVITY: As the couple grows older, they are secure in their love, they develop a flow of energy for action. They realized they are called to a ministry of love. Their ability to love deepens. They are thankful for their partner, They feel refreshed by their partner, free, secure & comfortable with them. They are best friends, growing together, <i>“We will make it together”.</i></p>
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There are essential elements of marital love that courtship knows little about.

- Courtship is the most superficial level of marital love.
- Willingness of letting go of my need for self-gratification when my partner feels no such need
- The sharing of struggles to triumph over adversities
- Supporting each other in defeat or crises.
- Renewing each other’s courage
- Carrying each others’ obligations as a flower rather than a painful burden (positiveness)
- Acknowledging the value of our partner everyday—looks, minds, varied appreciation
- Trusting of partner
- Accepting criticism
- Loyalty and dedication in face of sacrifices that need to be made

Conclusion: Repeat

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CULTIVATE THE IDEA OF COMMITMENT

A study of 6000 marriages and 3000 divorces shows that nothing is more important than determination. With determination individuals force themselves to adjust & accept situations which lead many couples to separation. They develop a very strong desire to preserve and protect their marriage and become creative in finding solutions.

Commitment is the mortar that holds the stones of marriage in place.

Have you ever wondered what the Christmas story would have been if Mary & Joseph had not the capacity to adjust to things beyond their control?

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