

Building Up Our Home Series-----#3

Challenges **I**n **M**ARRIAGE

- 1 - Defining Marriage**
- 2 - Dealing with Weaknesses and Differences**
- 3 - Handling Finances Properly**
- 4 - Handling Sexuality Properly**
- 5 - Learning to Communicate Properly**

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Lesson One

"Defining Marriage"

This quotation is taken from a Supreme Court decision in its effort to define and describe the nature and importance of the family (1885). Their simple definition is: *"the union for life of one man and one woman in the holy estate of matrimony."* Another simple definition would be: *"A decision and a commitment of a man and a woman to live together as husband and wife."* Jesus gives us a definition that reverts back to the beginning of marriage where God created Adam and Eve.

"Certainly no legislation can be supposed more wholesome and necessary in the founding of a free, self-governing commonwealth...than that which seeks to establish it on the basis of the idea of the family, as consisting in and springing from the union for life of one man and one woman in the holy estate of matrimony; (the family is) the sure foundation of all that is stable and noble in our civilization."

This quotation is taken from a Supreme Court decision in its effort to define and describe the nature and importance of the family (1885). Their simple definition is: *"the union for life of one man and one woman in the holy estate of matrimony."* Another simple definition would be: *"A decision and a commitment of a man and a woman to live together as husband and wife."* Jesus gives us a definition that reverts back to the beginning of marriage where God created Adam and Eve.

"For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate." (Matt. 19:5-6).

I know of no Scripture that states that this announcement of their decision has to be made public; but it seems to be the acceptable thing to be done—most societies practice such! It seems to be one of those inferred things. Thus, Marriage is also complying with the "mores" or Laws of our society in which we live.

Does Sexual Union constitute marriage? Generally speaking, all societies do not believe this, but they do realize that this is a major factor in the marriage arrangement. Read the following for clarification:

John 4:6-19

She evidently had been "married" five times (in the eyes of her society), but this last situation was not considered a marriage by her nor by Jesus—it was just a "live-in" situation. (vs. 17-18). Evidently sexual union does not constitute a marriage, but it is a privilege of marriage (Heb. 13:4).

Read the following verses about Joseph and Mary:

Matt. 1:18-25

Joseph took Mary to be his wife—to live together as husband and wife; but there was no sexual union until after the birth of Jesus! Were they married? There are some older folks who remarried after the death of their mate, but are not able to have sexual union. Does that mean they are not really married?

What about the statement in 1 Cor. 6:15-20? If a person has a sexual union with a harlot does that mean they are married? Or, is it trying to tell us that our body becomes unfit for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit when we commit such a sinful act? Is this saying that a person gets married (in the eyes of God) every time he has a sexual relationship with another person? We do not believe such! Sexual union is a sin outside of the marriage relationship, but it is a privilege within the marriage relationship (Heb. 13:4).

Purposes of Marriage

One way of defining marriage is to look at the purposes of such an arrangement. God, Himself, has certainly arranged for this relationship between human beings. And it should be obvious that He had His reasons for such. Evaluate the following thoughts in this regard.

1. **To bring happiness to the human race!** God stated this up front before He created Eve....*"It is not good for the man to be alone!"* (Gen. 2:18). His creation of Eve was to bring someone that could be a companion for him. Man is a socialable being and needs the presence of others around him. It is not good for him to be by himself. He needs someone to associate with, to fellowship with, to share with, and to be together with. All that God does is for the good of mankind! (Jas. 1:17; Psa. 68:5-6). But more in particular....man needed a "wife!" God gave man a mate for his pleasure and for his well-being (Prov. 18:22; 31:10-12).
2. **To provide a means of birth, preservation, caring for and the training of children.** Upon completion of the creation of male and female, God gave them a command: *"Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the*

birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

Gen. 1:28). God expects marriage to take care of those that come into that relationship!

3. To cultivate moral purity and refinement of Society. Marriage is a great blessing to mankind in more than one way. A primary factor that is obvious to all—children cannot take care of themselves or train them-selves. God provided parents who could do this for them (1 Tim. 5:8; Eph. 6:1-4; Deut. 6:4-9). This will help them to become independent and to establish their own home for the good of society. From a cultural and moral standpoint, marriage is a most important institution. To undermine the home, family, and marriage will also lower our moral and cultural values.

Concluding Thoughts

It would certainly seem obvious that Marriage, Family, and the Home are vital to the success of any society. God knew this when He created male and female and brought them together in Marriage. To make fun of, ridicule or to belittle Marriage and the Home is tending towards destroy-ing a vital factor that stabilizes a nation. But Marriage and the Home are also vital to the Church. Its leadership must come out of such! It is a large part of the early training of children that prepares them to become great leaders in the Nation or effective spiritual leaders in the Church.

Unfortunately, there are many factors that are striving to undermine the Home and Marriage. The Homosexual community is very active in this process. Divorce for any reason is an encouragement to break up a Marriage rather than to save it. Co-habiting without being married has risen to alarming rates in this country. This and many other factors that could be mentioned are leading to violence in our schools, problems with drug addiction, teenage pregnancies, etc. Marriage and the Family are slowly, but surely, being undermined in America which promises more of the bad things mentioned above.

Questions for Discussion

- 1. How does Jesus define Marriage?**
- 2. Can there be Marriage without "consent" or "commitment" to be married?**
- 3. Does Sexual union constitute Marriage? Explain your answer.**
- 4. What did Jesus say about the marital condition of the Samaritan woman?**
- 5. Can a couple be married and have no sexual union? Explain your answer.**
- 6. What purposes does Marriage fulfill in man's existence?**
- 7. What does Marriage have to do with moral purity?**
- 8. What are some things that are tending towards undermining Marriage, the Family, and the Home?**

Lesson Two

"Dealing with Weaknesses and Differences"

The Psalmists states about human beings that we are "*fearfully and wonderfully made.*" (Psa. 139:14-16). Each person is unique, different from all others, and yet there is much similarity to be found as well. This uniqueness is due in part to what we call Heredity. The study of one's Temperament would be a way of illustrating what we have been given by Heredity. When we talk about Character, we are looking at the results of one's Temperament, his Training and Conditioning, and the exercise of his Will.

Differences in People

The differences between human beings are usually what make us unique. Because marriage is such a close relationship day after day, month after month, and year after year—it is necessary to recognize and respect the differences in individuals. Often-times, it is those differences that may have drawn us to the person we marry. And yet, it can be those same differences that can help to bring about a break-up of the marriage.

Weaknesses in People

Let's take a few minutes to look at the term "Weaknesses." Differences in people can be identified with Heredity; but sometimes those differences could be called "Weaknesses." Every person seems to have what we call "Strengths" and "Weaknesses." We often identify one's Weaknesses as "Weakness of Character." This, we consider is not desirable! This kind of Weakness needs to be worked on, changed, and improved upon. **Every Marriage will potentially have conflicts because of Differences or Weaknesses!** This does not automatically say that they cannot be happy living together. Happiness in Marriage can still come in spite of these Differences or Weaknesses! It depends upon how we deal with these things. We usually advise young people to marry someone that have a lot of similar preferences and ideas. While this may cut down on the number of conflicts, it may also become boring and unchallenging as well. As a general rule—young people are attracted to each other and want to be with a person without much analyzing. This may not be bad, as long as the two are mature enough to handle personality differences or weaknesses. However, it is also possible that the Marriage may last for years, but sooner or later, the patience of one or both could become thinner and thinner and end in divorce.

Examples of Differences

A lot of the differences come because one is a male and the other is a female—which should be obvious to all! For example:

1. The man likes to hunt and fish and his wife could care less about such and may even have some strong feelings about such activities!
2. The woman likes to window shop—going from store to store just looking and may not even buy anything. While most men try their best to get out of shopping with their wives.
3. The man may want to watch TV programs such as Ball Games or adventure movies; while, the wife may prefer soap operas or similar TV programs.

These and so many other examples can remind us of our differences and how we must deal with them properly so that they will have only a minor effect on our Marriage. It is when one selfishly demands of the other to "like what I like" that conflicts set in. We must learn to respect one another's differences. This is what the Bible calls "love!" (Agape).

Rom. 12:10 _____

Eph. 5:25 _____

Phil. 2:3-4 _____

There are differences, generally speaking, in the sexual drives of the man and the woman. There are several factors that may contribute to this—some of which are unavoidable! But, if "love" (Agape) is there, these differences can be worked through.

1 Cor. 7:3-5 _____

Eph. 5:28-29 _____

Eph. 5:33 _____

Differences are unavoidable—they are naturally to be expected between men and women. God made us that way—generally speaking! We need to be able to clearly make a distinction between **Differences** and **Weaknesses**.

Examples of Weaknesses

Weaknesses can be **Differences**; but they can also be **Personality Deficiencies!** These are generally undesirable traits that need to be worked on and changed for the better. See if the following examples help to illustrate this concept.

1. One or both of the partners make poor decisions about spending money. As a result, they are behind on their bills and the tensions in their Marriage have increased greatly. Something needs to be done to correct such Deficiencies or the Marriage may not last.
2. The husband is lazy and irresponsible. He doesn't provide for his family as he should. Their finances are in disarray, but so is their Marriage! Even if the Marriage holds together, it will not be a happy one.
3. The wife not concerned about satisfying the needs of her husband or the husband not satisfying the needs of his wife.
4. The man too free around women or the woman too free around men that stirs up jealousy, questions or doubts.

1 Tim. 5:8 _____

Rom. 13:8 _____

Prov. 24:30-34 _____

! Cor. 7:3-5 _____

Concluding Thoughts

Selfishness, lack of consideration, irresponsibility, inordinate desires—these are not mere differences, but **SINS** that tear at the foundations of a Marriage. Love (Agape) is the solution to not only dealing properly with differences, but also with deficiencies. Read and analyze the following things that **Love** will and will not do:

1 Cor. 13:4-7 _____

Questions for Discussion

- 1. Can you define the difference between Heredity and Character?**
- 2. Can you define the difference between "Differences" and "Deficiencies?"**
- 3. Is it accurate to say that we all have our Differences and our Weaknesses?**
- 4. From whence comes conflicts in Marriage?**
- 5. Do Differences in people have to be a handicap in a Marriage?**
- 6. Can you give some additional Differences in human beings?**
- 7. Why are there Differences in the sexual drive of men and women?**
- 8. What are some additional undesirable traits in people's lives?**
- 9. Can all undesirable traits be called a sin?**

Lesson Three

"Handling Finances Properly"

Most people in this country (and probably around the world) do not expect to be rich, but they would like to have enough to live comfortably and pay their bills. Christians also have a struggle meeting their obligations on time as they should (Rom. 13:8). Earning money and handling it correctly is certainly a challenge of the newly married in particular. Quite a few decisions have to be made by Married people. If they are not properly made, undesirable consequences follow. It is stated by some, who have been involved with helping married couples with their finances, that this is either their #1 problem or a close 2nd. In this lesson we would like to suggest some basic things to help handle finances properly.

1. A Correct Spiritual Outlook

God must have thought money was important since He said so much about it in His Word.

1. At least 16 of the 38 Parables deal with money.
2. Over 2,000 passages have something to say about money in one way or another in the Bible.
3. But also, the fact that we spend most of our lives earning and spending it attests to its importance.
4. Also, the many giving and spending decisions that must be made over a lifetime shows clearly that it is important.

We must realize that money is not evil, it is simply a medium of exchange. The evil comes from the ***"love of money"*** (1 Tim. 6:10), or ***"covetousness which is idolatry"*** (Col. 3:5), or an improper managing of money (1 Cor. 4:2). It is the putting of emphasis of ***"Laying up treasures on earth"*** and not on ***"Laying up treasures in heaven"*** (Matt. 6:19-20). A choice needs to be made between God or Mammon because one or the other will capture and rule our hearts (Matt. 6:1). The correct view of money is:

1. To give recognition to God's ownership (Psa. 50:7-12).
2. To offer appreciation to the giver of every good and perfect gift (Jas. 1:17).
3. To be prepared to give an accounting of my stewardship someday (1 Cor. 4:2; Matt. 25:19).
4. To realize that working for my living is a blessing from God (Gen. 2:15; Prov. 6:6-11; 22:13).

5. Remember that my security and contentment is found in God, not in possessing possessions (Phil. 4:10-12; Lk. 12:15).

2. An Accurate Analysis of Financial Situation

The Lord emphasized the wisdom of evaluating our situation by two examples: (1) A man who needed to evaluate to see if he had enough money to finish building his house before starting to build; and (2) A King who needed to evaluate if he could be successful in going to battle against another King (Lk. 14:26-33). Shouldn't each couple sit down and see where they are financially before making any plans to spend money? Such an analysis is needed in order to:

1. Control spending.
2. Lower debts.
3. Establish financial goals.
4. Successfully manage money.
5. Have peace of mind.

3. Wise Planning and Setting of Goals

We do not believe that God condemns planning for the future, but planning without God! (Jas. 4:13-16). *"If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that."* The God we worship is a God of order and planning (Eph. 1:3-4). If He sees the value of such, why shouldn't we also see its value?

The wisdom of having financial goals can be seen in the following things:

1. They can serve as guidelines, but not absolutes, to control our use of money.
2. They can give direction and purpose to our lives.
3. Goals can help to crystallize our thinking.
4. They can provide personal motivation.
5. When goals are properly made in view of God's Word, they can become the course for my life.
6. Goals simply help to get the job done successfully and properly.

Goals should not only be worthy and Scriptural, but big enough to give God room to help us. To fail to do these things reflect upon us as well as the God we are suppose to be serving with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mk. 12:30).

4. Self-Control Spending

The Christian needs to be a wise spender of money! The prodigal son needed a lesson or two in the wise use of his inheritance—for he spent it all on immoral

and ungodly activities and pleasures (Lk. 15:11-16). The following are admonitions that we need to hear:

1. The foolish person devours all his living, but the wise are able to save some (Prov. 21:20).
2. Those who remain poor are those who like pleasures, wine, and expensive foods (Prov. 21:17).
3. A lazy person and a waster are identified as one (Prov. 18:9).

A basic requirement of successful money management is the control of one's spending and to do it intelligently, wisely, and Scripturally. Without such, a person cannot give an acceptable accounting in the Day of Judgment. God is not glorified by our foolish use of what He has entrusted to our care. And debts and lack of financial success will usually plague such a person.

5. Dealing Properly with Debt

The wise man called debt being a "servant" or "slave" to the lender (Prov. 22:7). The debtor is under obligation to pay his debt to the lender. James reminds us how the rich oppress the poor and drag them into court to force them to pay their debt (Jas. 2:6). Paul, in Romans, exhorts God's people to "*owe no man anything.*" (Rom. 13:8); or let no debt go unpaid. The Christian must pay his debts when due! The following are some "minuses" of debt:

1. A person has to pay interest....and sometimes high interest. This money could have been saved.
2. A person goes into debt beyond their ability to repay—which is dishonestly.
3. Heavy debt can put a terrible strain on marital relationships.
4. Debt may be an indicator of a deeper problem, such as: selfishness, greed, self-indulgence, impatience, poor self-image (lack of self-worth), lack of self-discipline, and a life-style too high for his pocketbook.
5. Unwise debt can lead to family arguments and abuse, or neglect in the support and caring for one's family.

There is joy in being debt free! Everyone should be able to experience what it is like.

Concluding Thoughts

Jesus said "*It is more blessed to give than to receive*" (Acts 20:35). Our giving is also a part of proper money management and needs to be treated as very important (2 Cor. 9:6-7).

Questions for Discussion

- 1. Why is a spiritual outlook concerning money so important?**
- 2. Are you impressed with how much is said about money in the Scriptures? Explain your answer.**
- 3. Why does money become a tool of Satan?**
- 4. Is it wrong (sinful) to make a lot of money? Explain your answer.**
- 5. Do you feel that analyzing your financial situation is important? Explain your answer.**
- 6. What is really the point of setting financial goals?**
- 7. What are the advantages of being debt-free?**
- 8. Why is it more blessed to give than to receive?**

Lesson Four

"Handling Sexuality Properly"

Why do people marry? And, why do people marry the person they marry? Has God designed one person for everyone (that will bring the greatest happiness)? Or, are there many factors that cause people to marry who they marry?

One obvious reason for getting married is to satisfy the need for **companionship** and all that that entails (Gen. 2:18). Another reason is what is called "**physical attraction.**" It often becomes the major reason for marriage. The problem here is that it can blind us to many other factors that should be considered before one marries. And it should be obvious (to any one who is willing to do some evaluating) that "facial beauty" and "physical form" and even "chemical sparks" do not, by themselves, make a good marriage. Sooner or later, a couple is going to have to get busy in building a warm, healthy, and an enduring relationship. We can emphasize "love," "courtship," and "marriage"; but marriage is not the end—but the beginning of a life-long of loving and courtship.

Sex and Marriage

Sex is not something man dreamed up, but something God planned for and designed for man's well-being and happiness. Sex is not something dirty, evil, or of the Devil. In the past, mis-guided religious leaders have taught and left the wrong idea about sex. And the worldly and unspiritual view by unbelievers has degraded sex to be like the animal world about us. Sex in marriage is not just to procreate, but it is also a blessing that helps to hold a marriage together (Gen. 2:18, 24).

The sexual drive is one of the strongest drives in humans. Because of its strength, people often marry to fulfill this drive without considerations of some of the important factors that should be involved in choosing a mate for life. The sexual urge is like hunger in that it seeks periodic satisfaction. The need for release will not go away. People who marry primarily for sexual release or satisfaction may not make the best of a mate.

Sex is not something to be shared outside of marriage (Heb. 13:4). Sex outside of marriage is strongly condemned (1 Cor. 6:9-11, 16-17; Gal. 5:19, etc.). The husband and wife have something special (all their own) that is not shared with others. It is not just a biological thing (like the animal world), but it involves feelings and personal development of each.

Sex is the means of emphasizing what it means to be a man and a woman. Sexual union is a means of communicating one's feelings for each other. Love is something that has to be expressed in word and in deed (1 Jn. 3:18).

Sexual Adjustments

Unless sexual adjustments are not made properly early in the marriage, it can lead to a lack of harmony in the marriage and eventually lead to the break-up of the marriage through divorce and/or infidelity (1 Cor. 7:1-3). An unhealthy view of sex usually comes from wrong knowledge or a lack of proper education or even superstition or "old wives fables." (1 Tim. 4:7). Also, a healthy sexual relationship with a wedded mate requires an overcoming of inhibitions. Usually, these inhibitions are probably the results of deeper problems connected with sexual activity before marriage. "Frigidity" and "impotence" are often rooted in early experiences that caused guilt. Sexual behavior is healthy if it is mutually satisfying and is engaged in according to social mores and does not violate the individual's conscience.

The basic purposes of **healthy sexual** activity in marriage are:

1. To give pleasure to one's rightful companion.
2. To receive release and pleasure for self.
3. To express the depth of love and affection for the companion.
4. To conceive desired children.

But sex can be **misused**, even in the marriage relationship.

1. "Giving sex for money" is obviously wrong!
2. But a wife or a husband can use sex to get their way on things or used as a bribe or reward.
3. Sex can also be used to give assurance of one's maleness or femaleness. If they doubt their manliness or womanliness or their attractiveness.....either can accelerate their sexual behavior in an attempt to reassure their attractiveness or desirableness.
4. Sex, sometimes, is about all that holds together a dull and unrewarding marriage.

Resolving Sexual Difficulties

Any threat to a marriage must be dealt with or it can eventually destroy the blessings of the relationship. While some problems are harder to be dealt with than others; yet, most problems can be solved by **unselfishness, tenderness, patience, and self-control!** Harsh efforts to force a mate only provokes resentment and revulsion (1 Cor. 7:3-5; Col. 3:19). Reading and studying the Scriptures and the wise findings of those who do research in these areas should help to eliminate false information.

It is imperative that the married couple learn how to communicate (to talk sensibly and lovingly) about what hinders one from engaging in the sexual act. Obviously involved in the communicating process is the open willingness to listen well—even if it hurts to hear things that are not too complimentary to one or the other. The sexual activity in a marriage is too critical not to take the time and patience to work through the difficulties.

Concluding Thoughts

Marriage is too important in our lives not to work at the job and keeping it being the blessing to our lives that God intended for it to be. Those who are willing to put in the time, reading, studying, and thinking will be rewarded with a great marriage that can make life wonderful.

Questions for Discussion

- 1. Can you look back and explain why you got married?**
- 2. If you are not married, can you explain why you want to get married?**
- 3. How would you describe "physical attraction?"**
- 4. Can you justify from Scripture this statement: "*Sex is not only for conceiving children, but for the well-being of a marriage.*"**
- 5. Do you believe that the sexual drive is the "strongest" drive in humans? Explain your answer.**

6. Is the desire for sexual activity merely one of the mind or is there something else involved that makes it so strong?

7. What is said about sex outside of marriage?

8. What are healthy and right reasons for sexual activity?

9. How can sex be misused even by the husband or wife?

10. What would help greatly in solving sexual difficulties?

Lesson Five

"Learning to Communicate Properly"

"So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath." (James 1:19) All marriages face adjustment problems to some degree or another. If these adjustments are not made, the marriage is heading for trouble and possible break-up. The following list will give an indication of some of the main reasons for failure of marriages:

- | | |
|---|----------------------------------|
| <i>Immaturity</i> | <i>Personality conflicts</i> |
| <i>Selfishness</i> | <i>Poor Sexual adjustments</i> |
| <i>Financial problems</i> | <i>Third party entanglements</i> |
| <i>Lack of mutual interests and goals</i> | <i>Burden of children</i> |

However, it is believed by many that there is a basic problem underlying the above reasons—A LACK OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION! Their reasoning is—when people lose the ability to communicate well with one another, resentment continues to build, mutual trust between the two will vanish, and the relationship dies. Statistics were compiled by a Marriage Counseling Service that came up with the following list of things that break up a marriage:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <i>1. Bad Communication</i> | <i>6. Quarreling</i> |
| <i>2. Selfishness</i> | <i>7. Sexual incompatibility</i> |
| <i>3. Infidelity</i> | <i>8. Lack of affection</i> |
| <i>4. Money disagreements</i> | <i>9. Lack of trust</i> |
| <i>5. No common interests</i> | <i>10. Untidiness</i> |

As you can see—bad communication was at the top of the list and possibly the underlying factor that help cause the other factors. Another survey was taken of 2,000 marriages with the question—"**What is the most vital ingredient for married bliss?**" The following are the top ten items listed:

- | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <i>1. Togetherness</i> | <i>6. Children</i> |
| <i>2. Consideration</i> | <i>7. Shared Interest</i> |
| <i>3. Discussing things</i> | <i>8. Sexual compatibility</i> |
| <i>4. Mutual trust</i> | <i>9. Financial security</i> |
| <i>5. Love and affection</i> | <i>10. Happy home life</i> |

It would seem obvious from the above that "good Communication" is indicated as helping to make for a better home situation. *"Couples in which both husband and wife were high in accurately understanding their partner's view on a number of issues were more satisfied with their marriage."*

God's Emphasis on Communication

Since speaking (communicating) is such an important factor in human relationships, the Bible has much to say about it. The very fact that God chose to make known the "good news" (Gospel) through preaching and teaching should certainly indicate how He values good communication (Romans 1:16; 1 Corinthians 1:21; etc.). Man's salvation eternally actually depends upon an accurate and effective communicating of that message (Galatians 1:6-9). Look at the passages below:

Jas. 1:19 _____

1 Peter 2:1 _____

Eph. 4:29 _____

1 Pet. 3:9 _____

Col. 4:6 _____

Eph. 4:25 _____

To communicate effectively, there must first be the desire to do so! Then, the desire needs to be followed by a conscious effort to use more than one means of communicating: **verbal and non-verbal!** It is important to understand some of the factors that causes bad or no communications between husband and wife (and others, as well). The following will help to illustrate:

1. *Differing backgrounds and experiences in life.*
2. *Taking each other for granted.*
3. *Reading something into the other person's words and actions that were not intended.*
4. *A sense of competition between the two.*
5. *Low self-esteem on the part of one or both.*
6. *A failure to listen properly.*
7. *That communication is more than just words.*
8. *The difficulty of the listener having the same understanding of the words used to try to communicate.*
9. *Being too judgmental in words and attitudes.*
10. *Male and female variations as well as individual variations.*

If we want to effectively communicate with our mate, it is important that we realize the many factors that enter into communicating. It is not a simple process, but a complex one that requires some diligence on each of our parts.

Symptoms of Communication Break-Down

The following list gives some general areas that would indicate that a couple have begun to have a break-down in their ability to effectively talk to one another:

1. *Long periods of silence ("He won't talk to me.")*.
2. *Cruelty (Physical or Mental)*.
3. *Quarreling*.
4. *Self-Pity (Low self-esteem)*.
5. *Neglect and laxity towards one another*.
6. *Revenge feelings and manipulation*.
7. *"Too busy" (Over-Scheduled)*.
8. *Self-Defensiveness. (Quick to justify one's self)*.
9. *Basic needs not being fulfilled*.
10. *Resentments, bitterness, hostility*.
11. *Dishonesty towards one another*.

Often-times a couple may not realize what their problem is and how to solve it. This is the reason why an outsider with some skills and training can pick up on problem areas not realized by the couple themselves.

Hindrances to Good Communication

There are many factors that enter into bad communications between people. It is quite obvious that the problems are not one-sided, but rather both the speaker and the hearer can cause mis-communications to take place. For instance, the speaker can have a poor evaluation of a situation, make wrong assumptions about people, or even choose inadequate words to try to communicate his ideas. While the hearer can be a poor listener, or have a personal bias against the one speaking, put wrong understanding on his words, or even honestly not even understand his words. These and many other factors enter into making communicating a problem that has to be worked at to overcome. Following are a list of Scriptures that would suggest some of the hindrances that must be overcome if we are to communicate correctly and effectively:

1. *Luke 21:26* _____
2. *Prov. 17:9* _____
3. *Col. 3:19* _____
4. *Matt. 7:1-5* _____
5. *Eph. 4:26* _____
6. *Eph. 4:25* _____
7. *Eph. 4:29* _____
8. *Eph. 4:31* _____
9. *Eph.4:32* _____
10. *2 Pet. 1:10* _____

Questions for Discussion

- 1. What are some problems that can cause a breakup of marriage?**
- 2. What is believed to be a basic cause that underlies all of the above reasons?**
- 3. What are some of the top reasons for marital bliss?**
- 4. How has God shown the importance of good communications?**
- 5. What are some things that can cause bad or no communications between husband and wife?**
- 6. What are some symptoms of communication break-down?**
- 7. What are some Scripture statements that show that communication can be hindered?**

Lesson Six

"Crises in Marriage"

All are in general agreement that the family is in a crisis situation! Those who believe in the family agree and so do those who are against the family agree....and they are busy trying to change it to what they think it should be! Christianity came into a world that needed drastic changes in the home and in society. Even among the Jews (who reputedly took pride in their belief in the one true God of Heaven) needed to make some big changes (Matt. 23:29-39; Mk. 1:1-4). Over time, Christianity has had a good affect upon both the family and the nations. However, today, there seems to be a devaluing of marriage, the home, and the family concepts as defined by God in His Word. We would like to spend a little time in this lesson to look briefly at several factors that are showing this crisis and that are helping to bring on this crisis in Marriage and the Home.

Evident Problems

The way that God has designed Marriage and the Home, it should be a place of maturity, real love, respect for authority, discipline, and direction for life. The Family should help to provide courage and hope when things are bad around us. But unfortunately, many families in our nation are the major cause of rebellion, lustfulness, and drug-addition among our youth. The growing absence of mothers in the home of small children has robbed it of one of its most important factors of stability. Mothers of children that are age 6 up to 17 years old constitute close to 50% of the adult female population that are working outside the home. Also, along with this, fathers are working at two jobs so they have very little time with their family. The result is that children have a very poor image of what a true family life should be like. Young people are not prepared for marriage (as God designed it) because of the bad example of the parents (Eph. 6:1-4).

The home can provide the greatest and most important training that a child can get—if it is what God wants it to be! Stability of older families helps to give hope and stability to younger families (Prov. 31:27-29). But, the Home will have a real struggle when the primary institutions of society (Universities, Courts, Legislatures, and Religions) not only fail to defend the home, but actually undermine it both conceptually and in practice. Laws and Public Policies must help to strengthen the family, not destroy it. Even non-religious people can surely see the value of Marriage and the Family for the good of society. Someone has observed in the past: *"As the home goes, so goes the nation!"* Someone else has also observed: *"Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people."* (Prov. 14:34).

FUNDAMENTAL THREATS TO THE HOME!

1. **Humanism**—Humanism revolves around man, deifies man, makes him capable of working all things out himself. But there is no real meaningful purpose in life as to why he is here—it is anybody's guess. They seek their own welfare, follow their own inclinations, and ignore any ultimate obligations. It is man's attempt to solve his problems without God. Religion is a "crutch" that "superstitious" people rely on. But notice what the Scriptures point out about such people:

1 Cor. 1:18-21 _____

Rom. 1:18-21 _____

Prov. 3:5-6 _____

It is this kind of people that has gotten us into the mess that Marriage and the Family is in. They repudiate and despise efforts to follow the Bible as the Word of God; and strongly advocate that they have the answers to what is happening in our society.

2. **Materialism**—Materialism is an obsession to get things more and more as the chief end in life. The more prosperous man becomes, the less he needs God in his life! Our nation has hit a new high in prosperity; but with it comes the danger of turning from God and His ways (Deut. 6:10-18). Notice what Jesus has to say about this concept:

Lk. 12:16-21 _____

Matt. 6:19-21 _____

Matt. 16:26 _____

Mark 4:19 _____

3. **Divorce**—Easy divorce for any reason has done its part in breaking up of the Family in our society. Some believe that this country is experiencing the greatest break up of the home in our history. It doesn't seem to matter that God hates Divorce; nor what God has to say about the matter. Even when there is re-marriage.

4. Co-Habitation—Living together, but not Married. This in itself is saying that marriage is not desirable! Those who oppose marriage point out the failure rate to justify their actions. Any appeal to traditional ways seems to fall on deaf ears. Religious efforts are appreciated by some, but it is limited more and more. In the eyes of many, the Family is losing its pre-eminent status as the basic social institution that brings children into the world and rears them. The TV and Movie industry are constantly undermining the things that give stability to the home. New medical technology has made it possible for singles or same-sex couples to have children outside of the family. The changing views in society towards illicit sexual emphasis has made illegitimacy and co-habitation a desired end. Many of the "Protestant Religious Churches" have privately and some openly accepted these practices. Less and less teaching is being done on God's view of Marriage and the Home. See how God describes the Family:

Heb. 13:4 _____

Matt. 19:4-5 _____

Matt. 19:9 _____

1 Cor. 6:9-11 _____

1 Cor. 7:1-2 _____

Concluding Thoughts

It is critical that we, as the people of God, set before the world the proper example of Marriage and the Family. As long as we respect God and His Word and live by it, we should be able to have some influence on our society. All of the problems that mankind has is because he will not listen to his Creator!

*"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."
(Rev. 3:22)*

Questions for Discussion

- 1. What are some indications (in your mind) that Marriage and the Family are in trouble (crisis) in this country?**
- 2. Why do authors of books on Marriage and the Family have to say about women working outside the home?**
- 3. How does the Home provide the training necessary for young people to get married?**
- 4. What is Humanism and why does their philosophy undermine Marriage and the Family?**
- 5. Why does Materialism affect Marriage and the Family?**
- 6. How does Divorce depreciate Marriage and the Family?**
- 7. What is the message that "Co-habitation" sends out to others about Marriage and the Family?**

