

Even Marriages Made in Heaven May Need Repair on Earth

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Dedicated

to the

Sacred Heart of Jesus

and the

Immaculate Heart of Mary

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD	3
Idealism Period	5
Reality/Disappointment Period	7
Non-Effort Period	11
The Black Pit Period	13
How to Repair a “Bad” Marriage	17
Divorce: A solution or Greater Problem?	21
Children.	27
Situation Ethics	29
Time of Adjustment	33
Love-Sharing.	37
54 Principles of a Happy Marriage	41
Family Planning	47
Bottom Line	53
APPENDIX A (Communication Meters)	59
APPENDIX B (Marriage is Always 3 Ways)	60

FOREWORD

Most books on the marriage state focus on how to change bad effects that a marriage has accumulated, but do little explain the real cause behind those effects. Without an understanding of those causes, changes made become only temporary solutions to permanent problems.

While there is no way to absolutely guarantee that a marriage will always be gloriously happy, there are definite ways to ensure that it will be permanent. The same philosophy that guides this premise can also furnish the answers to make a marriage always reasonably happy in spite of whatever problems do arise. While a seemingly new approach in planning and living a successful marriage in today's world, it finds most of its suggestions and methods from time-honored principles of success.

This book can be an aid to all married couples as it also explains the normal states of marriage that most (if not all) couples encounter. It centers on a discussion of the six stages through which most marriages usually pass. Suggestions are given in order to skip some of the negative stages, or at least pass through them faster - and with less conflict and problems.

Listed also are 54 principles - that if followed - lead to a happy marriage. Included also are recommendations which could repair a "bad" marriage, in order to avoid the permanent "solution" of divorce to an often temporary problem.

Even happily married couples may want to use this book on an on-going basis to prevent staleness in their marriage by recognizing the natural elements that form a marriage over a period of time.

Marriage should neither be a trial-and-error affair nor a daily evaluation on whether or not the good outweighs the bad. The married state probably offers the most happiness - or the most misery that one can experience on this earth. If it can never be taken too lightly, then some aspects of the living of it can never be taken too seriously.

INTRODUCTION

If every person is unique, every male/female relationship is also unique. Here, it is a case of $1+1=1$, as one unique male plus one unique female equals one unique relationship.

This, however, only refers to the specific aspects of individuals and relationships - not the general aspects. This means that there are characteristics of male behavior that is basic to being a male and characteristics of female behavior that is basic to female behavior. We are past the period not too long ago when attempts were made not just to make males and females "equal," but "the .same."

Nowadays, the innate differences of how males and females think, act, and react are finally being publicized.

It is often difficult for two best friends of the same sex to get

along if they spend too much time together, or are put in a confining situation. Should it then be a surprise that a man and a woman who are married (which somewhat fulfills both of the above conditions), sometimes or often find it difficult or very difficult to get along.

Occasionally, there is an exception - a couple who have been married for 50 years, spend all their non-work time together, and have never had a big argument. The fact that there are very few exceptions only proves the rule.

The average (or above average) couple should never compare themselves to these "ideal" couples. The first reason is that they, too, have a unique relationship. The second reason is that the observed marriage may not be as "ideal" as it looks on the outside. Many people have thought of a couple as the happiest one they know, only then to hear that they're getting divorced? Sometimes that is because a big show is being put on for other people's benefit.

Every couple that gets married thinks that they will always be as happy as they were on their wedding day. They can't even imagine not feeling the same way for the rest of their lives. Still, a good percentage will be divorced within the short span of a few years.

There are several things that sabotage these marriages, the first being ignorant of the psychological factors that are involved in dating, and the psychological factors that are involved in marriage. (The dating ones are covered very well in Scott Anthony's "For Now or Forever - A Dating Guide to Ensure a Lasting and Happy Marriage." He chronicles the factors that should be considered in dating (the mental and spiritual more than the physical) when planning for the long-term success of a marriage.) His capitalization of the word Love when referring to its real meaning - as differentiated from its present usage in the place of the word lust, will be continued here.

While he is right to say that choosing the right person as a spouse can eliminate or prevent much of the future problems in marriage, there are again, aspects of every marriage that fit almost every couple.

" A Marriage Repair Manual" was written for three reasons:

A) To have couples understand the factors which make even the good marriages difficult at times;

B) To aid couples to go through the six stages of marriage without panicking and looking to divorce as an "easy way" out of their problems, and

C) To show unhappily married couples a way to improve their relationship and regain happiness.

In a marriage there are many adjustments and changes that take place in their relationship - the better the preparation, the fewer and easier are those adjustments. Urban Steinmetz categorizes them in what he calls "The Five Stages of Marriage," and claims that all marriages go through these stages. This is certainly true of all marriages that do not have enough Love in them from the very beginning - which is probably the case with most marriages today.

The different stages of marriage will be discussed herein, with two differences from Steinmetz. The first is that six periods of time

will be listed and covered here. The second difference is the belief that the worst period can be avoided and the degree of negative aspects of the others can be lessened by one simple principle put into operation from the beginning of a marriage.

Our terms for the six stages will be as follows:

Idealism Period

Reality / Disappointment Period

Non-Effort Period

Black Pit Period

Time of Adjustment Period

Love-Sharing Period

Some of these periods of time are short and some are long - depending on the qualities of each individual spouse, their relationship together, and the effort involved (or lack of it) in each given period.

We seem to be living in a society which no longer respects or encourages a strong work ethic, and this may be evident in marriages more than anywhere else.

If you're riding a horse, you want to know the terrain so you can prepare for how bumpy the ride may be, and not get thrown by a sudden jolt you were not expecting. This book hopes to serve as a trail map so that the long ride of marriage can be smoother.

IDEALISM PERIOD

While repeatedly proclaiming the fact that reason is more important than emotion in choosing a marriage partner for life, it is not meant to suggest that emotion does not play an important part. It is not saying that marriage should just be the head doing supermarket shopping for qualities and the heart not involved. *Reason* helps guarantee a successful and satisfying marriage, but *emotion* is what determines the amount of joy and happiness in it. Reason is the cake itself, but emotion is the icing.

Emotion is the highest it will ever be on the "honeymoon." Few people would doubt that a good honeymoon is probably the single most happy experience that a male and female can enjoy together in this life - especially if both are virgins on their wedding night. It is the first time they are giving themselves completely to another person in general, and to each other in specific. It is not only a physical union, but a mental one because of the commitment of the vows, and a spiritual one because the vows are for life. They are solemn vows because they are taken before God and not just other human beings. There is no need for optimism at this time, because idealism is in full force. Unfortunately, it does not stay this way forever. If "love is blind," marriage is a real eye-opener.

There will always be some unknowns beyond the door of marriage, but at least it helps to be in the right building. That means both people actually Loving each other in the highest meaning.

The first married stage can be called the Idealism Period. It is characterized by the couple believing each other to be Cinderella and

Prince Charming. Cinderella is a nice fairy tale, and its idealism is definitely and naturally appealing to the young. Sometime between childhood and adulthood, however, the fairy tale has to be put away, and the complexity of male-female relationships and the reality of marriage needs to be taught.

Everyone has an "ideal" in their mind, and because they are not taught to think anything different, they usually end up marrying the person who comes closest to their fantasized ideal. Of course, their ideals do not exist except in the fiction of movies, TV shows and romance novels, which has transferred intact to their conscious and subconscious minds. Cinderella and Prince Charming have now taken on a more contemporary look - like that of movie stars. The most adoring fan of any entertainment star is only infatuated with their screen personality, not what they truly are as individuals. One could easily be disappointed after some amount of personal contact, but not as long as the fantasy stays a total fantasy.

On the honeymoon itself, any problems and disagreements are in the past, and the future looks glorious. It is just the two of them - no family or friends, and away from home, and no job or responsibilities. It is easy and natural to concentrate only on the physical at this time.

From a period of a few days to a few weeks, everything is new - from new places to see and visit, which preoccupies the mind with mental enjoyment, to the newness of sex, which preoccupies the body with physical enjoyment. It is the closest thing on earth today to approximate the first days in the Garden of Eden between Adam and Eve. Going back home after the honeymoon, it is a case of playing house with sex added - at least in the beginning.

Being in the Idealism Period is like flying in a plane above the clouds and all you see is clear sky above and mounds of white puffs below. You cannot stay up forever, though, and eventually you begin to run out of gas (high emotion) and begin to lose altitude. Dropping below the clouds and returning to earth is like the reality of marriage setting in. While the honeymoon may be the height of ordinary human experience, in itself, it is not ordinary.

When that (sometimes rude) awakening of reality takes place is when the expression "the honeymoon is over" is used. That can happen anytime within a few days after the returning from the going-away physical "honeymoon" to a few months later. (It is certainly not a good sign if it happens on the honeymoon trip itself). Regardless of how long it takes, however, it is inevitable.

Part of the reason it happens is because the return to ordinary daily life takes time and focus away from just the physical. Idealism can last at a high level only so long in the real world. The key to long-term future happiness is how the couple, individually and together, handle this inescapable lessening of idealism and its accompanying lessening of emotional fervor. In the beginning of marriage, however, even when the glow of the physical honeymoon starts to dim, the mind still finds it easy to continually idealize. If things are not perfect today - they will be tomorrow.

In this period the couple makes excuses for each other's small faults or failures as they show up. In her mind, "He did not really mean to cut me short when I started to tell him what happened while I was shopping. He was just tired from work." In his mind, "She did not mean to not have supper ready when I got home. She just lost track of the time." Nothing is said out loud, because it might disturb the idealism. Any hurts, however small, are felt deeply and are carried for a long time.

This is also a time when young marrieds and their respective parents may try to improve their relationship because both are in a kind of imagined world as a result of the change in their lives. If, when getting married, the child moves out of the parents' house, both parties automatically believe that they will get along better because they are not around each other as much. There is some practical truth to that. The child, however, also believes that the parents will also automatically now treat the child as an equal adult with the same respect as others, as far as having taken responsibility and having the maturity to handle it. This assumption of the child is not always felt by the parents, and might sometimes be a mistake if they did.

The parents most often hope it is really true about their child being on their own and no longer their responsibility. While parents hope their child remains in the Idealism Period (for their own benefit as well as the child), it is not an attitude that can be criticized. Conversely some parents are secretly resentful of the Idealism Period of their children, because they do not like the feeling that their child loves someone else more than them, and they are no longer needed as much.

In the Idealism Period, a couple often think that they "love each other so much" that they need no one else - including God. The effect of that kind of thinking is not always felt immediately - but it is always felt nonetheless. Bishop Sheen, however, summed up the beautiful mystery of human love when he said, "True lovers are never alone, for it takes not two but three to make love, and the third is God...married love is the joining of two poverties out of which is created a great wealth." We need God in our daily lives for two reasons: 1) to give this life a meaning and purpose, in order to 2) use it as a basis for earning a reward in the next one.

It is no secret that life is repetitious. We wake up in the morning, eat our breakfast, brush our teeth, shave or put on make-up, go to work, eat lunch, work some more, eat supper, talk a little, watch TV, take a bath, and go to bed again. Even if these things are enjoyable, they are certainly not thrilling. Even if some things were exciting the first time, like shaving or wearing high heels, or driving a car, they soon take on the repetitiveness of everything else. Parents are very familiar with their children enjoying cutting the grass with a riding lawn mower until they get a driver's license.

This is why human beings constantly look for new experiences. This is also why unique experiences are remembered not only longer but also better. A distinctive meal eaten only once cannot be physically re-experienced but it can be mentally remembered as being

special. More often than not, it remains special in the mind for the very reason that it was only experienced once. Repeat enjoyments on a lesser scale after the first time may also tend to dull the height of the first experience. Even where unusual experiences are enjoyed over and over - like maybe skydiving or riding a roller coaster - nothing quite equals the uniqueness of the first time.

The same is true for sex. Sex resulting from escalated passion in the back seat of a car in the late hours after a date will not over a lifetime have the same meaning as sharing Love on your wedding night with the spouse who has made a commitment to your happiness for the rest of their life. Even sexual intercourse involving Love (as contrasted to simply having sex) will still be basically repetitious - as there are basically only so many positions and so many places to have it in.

Repetition is one of the reasons why idealism of an individual or a situation can never stay at that level permanently. It is simply a fact of this life, and that fact certainly extends to marriage. Sex can only avoid being routine if it is an act of giving pleasure and not just simply receiving it. This is why sexual intercourse in marriage is more "Love-sharing" than "love-making." The term love-making almost sounds like it is being artificially created, which would make that term more suitable for fornication and adultery.

The combination of living together in marriage (the fifth transitional stage in relationships) and coming out of the Idealism Period definitely takes an adjustment. It will happen regardless of the amount of the qualities in each individual, the amount of Love present, and the amount of time spent together before marriage. The more the amount of the above three things, the easier the adjustment will be. Even when this is realized in advance, it is not always realized that it often takes months, or even years for most of the adjustments to be made. The physical adjustments are made much sooner because of practical necessity. The mental adjustments are twofold: to the physical adjustments themselves, and to other mental adjustments. Too much idealism in the beginning, however, and the change becomes more than just an adjustment.

REALITY/DISAPPOINTMENT PERIOD

In the second period the first Reality is that the marriage will not stay forever in the Idealism Period. While everyone says that they knew the honeymoon would not last forever, they all secretly hoped that it would - and thought that it might. Someone once quipped that, "Marriage is like deep-sea fishing. You never know what you have got until you get it in the boat." The first disappointment is when you take your first honest look at what you have hooked. It may not be a total disappointment, but it is always at least a small let-down.

The first way for this to show is the couple "discovering" that they do not always need to be together. It is a case of the wearing off of the mental newness of "being married." There is then the natural step of not needing to be together, followed by the next natural step of not wanting to be together all the time. (This is natural, as even best friends of the same sex, who can often have much more in common, can still have small irritations build-up when thrown together for an extended period of time - as on a vacation together.) This will not hit both spouses at the same time or to the same degree.

To prevent the misunderstandings of feeling somewhat rejected at this time, there are some principles that should be followed all through a marriage which should be put into practice in the Idealism Period. One example is the principle that a husband and wife should not spend every minute of non-working time together - even in the very beginning of marriage. When a couple does this in the Idealism Period, it is possible to feel like something must be wrong or lacking with the relationship when that desire is no longer there to the same extent later. It is, therefore, a good idea to spend at least a little time apart starting after the physical honeymoon.

One of the best occasions for this is in the area of visiting in-laws. It is a common occurrence for one spouse to expect the other to always go along when visiting relatives, regardless of who, where, and how often. While it is charitable and commendable for a spouse to do so sometimes when something else is preferable, or just when "not in the mood", feeling obligated to do so every time will eventually bring on anything from inner resentment to outward animosity. Being free to choose whether to go or not, takes pressure off the situation as well as gives the couple some time apart which is good for both of them.

Occasional visits without the spouse in the beginning will also prevent the uncomfortable position of having "to explain" absences of a spouse when it almost inevitably occurs after a period of time. And the longer it takes for the first absence after the marriage, the more the questions and the longer the explanation.

Another principle that should be followed from the beginning of a marriage, as mentioned previously, is for the husband to have a night out with the boys and the wife to have a night out with the girls. This should be started in the Idealism Period, even when it is not yet a particular desire. There is no absolute as to how often it should be, but once a week is not too often, and less than once a month would

not be often enough. The same reasons apply for being with friends without always including your spouse, as they are with relatives.

Again, there should be positive outings for both. It is not positive for the husband to go watch stag movies with his buddies, or for the wife to go to a "hen party" where the only talk is negative about men. (Those activities, incidently, are harmful for everyone - not just married people.)

It is important for a married couple to understand what the phrase "and the two shall become one" means and not try to make it what it is not and can never be. It does mean that "the two shall become one" physically in the act of sexual intercourse - but that is only for occasional short periods of time. No couple ever spends their whole marriage in intercourse interlock. It does mean that "the two shall become one" mentally, when they share the same interests and time together enjoying them. It does not mean that every interest has to be shared together or that they now have to have the same favorite color, favorite food, or favorite song.

In essence, "and the two shall become one" means a spiritual union in which the married couple shares a philosophy of life and will work together for the rest of their lives to follow and fulfill it. This even includes when (not "if") there are physical and mental differences or problems. It is only the spiritual meaning that always remains 100% - if the vows taken at the wedding ceremony were actually vows, and not just pleasant sounding words repeated to fool everyone (including each other and especially God).

These principles of spending time apart and non-shared interests could not come up as half the problem after marriage if they were not ignored during the engagement period, and even during the going-steady period.

After a couple discovers that they do not have to be around each other all the time, they then discover that when they are together they do not always have to be touching. During courtship, the couple would never consider sitting anywhere in a home except next to each other on a couch. In a car, they are almost joined at the hip when he is driving. Now they sit apart in both places, and while they may feel no great loss, it is still not the same as before.

The dating and courtship period was when the affections were first expressed. These include the physical affections of hand-holding, hugging, and simple kisses. The mental side of affections are what's included in doing thoughtful and romantic things in order to please the other person - especially the male towards the female.

When sex is introduced into the relationship in marriage, the affections seem to get somewhat bypassed. Part of this is natural. Everyone knows that before marriage you have 1) the little affections, and 2) that excited feeling when being with the person you Love - even in planning to be together. After marriage (at least supposedly not until then) there is 3) the higher pleasure of sex, and 4) the security that comes with being married. What people do not realize is that when you gain 3 and 4, you lose part or most of 1 and 2. The little affections are not needed as much and are then

considered less important, and you are no longer as excited just being around each other. Not understanding this natural happening has caused many a couple to misinterpret it to mean that they are less "in love" than when they first got married. (They *are* less in love if all that meant was emotions.)

All it really means is that they are less in "romantic love" and the physical newness of having the sex drive satisfied (whenever desired) is wearing off. While the fact of this always means some disappointment, ("the honeymoon is over"), it is something that should be expected.

The first aspect of losing some of the affections when gaining sex is a natural result of moving to a higher level of pleasure. Holding hands will never be the same once sexual intercourse is experienced. It is similar to beef jerky not being very tasty when compared to a rib-eye steak. It is similar to the fact that swimming in a back yard pool is not as much fun after scuba-diving. Now, if you scuba-dive at a very young age, you may lose years of the fun of a back yard pool. Have sex at too young an age, and you lose years of the enjoyment of small affections. Not only is the enjoyment lost, but the meaning of those affections is often lost.

The more little affections are expressed *without* sex before marriage, the more little affections will remain *with* sex after marriage. If there are few affections before marriage, it will likely go to none once "the honeymoon is over." While affections may be important to both men and women, they are much more important to women. This is just one more reason why couples, especially women, should be conscious of saving sex for marriage. By engaging in sex before marriage, they can be giving up the affections for both periods of time.

Columnist Ann Landers once did a survey on how many women would be willing to forego sex in exchange for cuddling. In over 90,000 responses from women, 72% said they would trade sex for more affection and tenderness. Surprisingly, over 40% of this number were women under 40. While there will always be some loss of affections after marriage, there will be considerably more if preceded by premarital sex.

The second exchange, from having the thrill of being together to gaining the feeling of security, is also a natural one. Familiarity does not have to breed contempt, but it does breed what could be called "comfortability." That means that while you enjoy the company of your spouse, it is not always a big thrill. There is not the same anticipation of seeing each other once you are married as there was when dating. While this is often considered a sign of the lessening of "love," it may often really be a sign of greater Love. This is because you enjoy being around someone because of the type of person they are, and not because of the excitement you feel. Always remember that the basis of real Love is not just feelings and emotions.

Most things in life involve a trade-off of some kind and marriage is no different. Some people like to try to have all four (affection, anticipation, sex and security) by having an affair. While

they may experience the first two again with someone new, they always (whether they realize it at the time or not) lose the last two with their spouse at the same time. If fornication and Love cannot exist at the same time, then it is true even more so for adultery and Love.

To be happy in this life, along with peace of mind, it is necessary to accept mentally and physically the trade-offs that are a part of this life. Marriage is not simply a trading of independence for interdependence; it involves trade-offs in many areas.

Because affection does not stay at the same level of the honeymoon or Idealism Period, it does not mean that the amount of Love is any less. It is just not expressed in ways as demonstrative. It is always important, however, to cultivate the exchange of affection during all periods.

The real disillusion starts when the wife realizes that she is not married to Prince Charming, but to a man who belches at the table. The husband realizes that he is not married to Cinderella, but to a woman who has her make-up spread all over the bathroom but none on her face.

Every day or week brings a new disappointment to the idealized image of a perfect marriage. You first become aware of certain faults of the other person and start to wonder whether or not they will improve. You also may become aware of some of your own faults, and this can be even more discouraging. Because communication on how you feel about some things was suppressed in the Idealism Period, and also probably before marriage, it is difficult to bring them up now. If communication is stopped for either real or imagined hurts, it usually starts best with an apology. In one of his comedy routines, Bill Cosby says when he wakes up in the morning, he tells his wife, "I'm sorry." He figures he's going to have to say it for something that day anyway, and might as well get it out of the way early.

A classic example of how Hollywood fosters the idealism of love and marriage is the movie "Love Story" which had as its banner Ali McGraw saying, "Love means never having to say you are sorry" to Ryan O'Neal. That may well be true with perfect Love, but since perfect Love will never be found on Earth, it is misleading to insinuate that having to say you are sorry means that Love was missing. It might not be shown in the highest possible degree, but that does not mean it was missing completely. It was much more true when Ryan O'Neal in "What's Up, Doc?" was told that same line by Barbara Streisand he had apologized, and he told her, "That's the dumbest thing I ever heard."

The hurts inflicted in a marriage can always be real as well as imagined, but in this stage, each spouse's guard is up all the time. Each one is really sensitive to what the other person says, especially because they realize what they themselves are holding back. Doubts come to mind, such as "Will the honeymoon feeling ever return?" If the answer is "Probably not," then the next question is, "Should I have married this person?" Sometimes it is, "Were my parents and friends

right that I should not have gotten married?"

Whatever the doubts expressed inside, the outside remains a front to all. To everyone who asks, the marriage is still in the honeymoon stage. This is done as a part of optimism that it will get back to that stage, and also not to give an idea that others may have been right who expressed doubts about the marriage. This is true in regard to parents even more than friends, often because there has already been a time of disappointment in regard to the new relationship with the parents that also did not last.

Both spouses also find out during this stage that they cannot fill all of their spouse's needs, and both may over-compensate for this by an over-concentration on sex. They have usually been taught to believe that the sexual relationship is the most important one in marriage. Following the false premise to its natural conclusion, more (or better) sex is supposed to be the basis for solving all problems. When a couple believes this and finds that it fails, they may have nothing left to fall back on for a solution.

When the newness of marriage wears off, each partner may seek to regain more the level of former friendships and personal interests. There would be no resentment involved in either spouse if it happened at the same time and to the same degree. It seldom does.

It is also seldom that both have the same ability with regard to Love. To be more specific, the capacity *to* love and the capacity *for* love is the same, or to put it another way, the need to give and the need to receive is the same. Any disparagement shows up in this period. It is usually felt first in the area of the physical. The wife no longer receives the romance and affection of courtship from her husband, and the husband no longer receives from his wife the same amount of time or interest for sex as on the honeymoon. It is demonstrated in the mental area with the difference in conversation needs. Whenever one wants to talk, the other one may not be interested in listening at that time. The communication gap opens up not only in the "when" of conversation, but also in the "how much" and "what about." It is commonly known that women want to tell every small detail about something that happens, while men want them to get to the punch line as quickly as possible. Conversely, wives complain that their husband do not go into enough detail when telling them something. This may always be somewhat of a problem, but it usually surfaces for the first time here.

It is also a time when spouses start to take each other for granted, not in a purposeful negative way, but just as a matter of course. The wife may need constant assurance that she is a good homemaker, while the husband may think that just going home at night should be enough assurance for her. The husband may need to know his wife is satisfied with his job and his income, while she may think that not constantly asking for material things should tell him that.

Differences in opinion surface here because of two psychological reasons. The first is a conscious one: there is no reason any longer to soft soap one's opinions in order to continue the

relationship. Getting married is supposed to have guaranteed that. The second one is subconscious: somehow because of being married, your spouse will now have the same opinion as you on everything. When Reality/Disappointment sets in, it is not so much a "change" in the other person, as the true qualities (or lack of them) in the other person are no longer hidden, no longer not recognized, or no longer can be ignored.

It may even be that personal habits remain the same, but the quantitative needs have changed. If the man shaved five days a week when they saw each other five days a week, it was 100% of the time for the woman. Now if he only shaves five days a week (and looks grubby on the weekend), it is no longer fills 100% of her wants in this area. If the woman kept her one room clean when she lived with her parents, and she now still cleans only one room a week, it does not fill 100% of his wants in this area.

During this stage, a couple may bicker a little, but it is usually over small frustrations and disappointments. It does not go too far and there is usually a quick making-up to get back to positive emotional feelings. Sometimes it comes too fast - not the attempt of making-up, but the "settling" of the issue. Often the argument is not about what is really bothering them, and too fast a make-up simply masks the real problem until it inevitably surfaces again - usually with worse repercussions. A willingness to delay a quick kiss-and-make-up may allow some new communication lines to be opened, which would help them more. This not only helps regarding the present disagreement, but also in the future.

A disagreement is not really a problem unless it is allowed to get out of hand. There will always be disagreements just as there will always be needs not met. Communication in a calm and rational manner, however, can diffuse most of the emotion involved in them. With the defensiveness of emotion removed, it is much easier to come to some kind of understanding, and make necessary adjustments and compromises.

If you like 90% of your fiancé, you will probably like only 70% or 80% of your spouse. The more one concentrates on what is disliked, the harder this period is, the longer it lasts, and the more likely the couple will move into the next two periods. The absence of fighting about little things may prevent that from happening, but if there is also an absence of working to improve them, the couple may stay in the Reality/Disappointment Period for a long time. While it is not a "bad" marriage, it does not grow to the level of a really happy marriage either.

After marriage, there is always some jading about sex. Society in general, and the entertainment industry in specific, constantly give the impression that the most important thing in this life is having sex. At one time, the focus may have been put on making money, but since that has already been found to fail at the end-all of life, the focus has been switched to having sex. (It should always be kept in mind that some people want you to have nothing but sex on your mind because they end up making money from it.) With sexual

satisfaction promoted as the single necessary ingredient for a happy marriage, there can be much disappointment when it is discovered that this is false. The more the marriage was based on the physical, the more the disappointment.

If a couple based their marriage about 90% on the physical (being attracted to each other and "sexually compatible") and then find out that sex is only about 10% of a marriage, there may not be much left upon which to build a future. They quickly find out that a marriage partner should be chosen by action of the brain, not by action of the sex organs.

NON-EFFORT PERIOD

This period could also be called "giving up." It is a temporary period which will lead to either the Black Pit Period or the Time of Adjustment Period.

In the Non-Effort Period, couples lose sight of their original intentions. While they may have pledged the willingness to work at marriage during the Idealism Period, they are now at the beginning of the time when this needs to be put into practice. Unfortunately, the pledge was made when the emotions were high and working at it was unnecessary. Words are cheap then. Now the emotions are not as high, and the intentions have lessened along with the emotions.

This is the period in which couples start arguing - rather than discussing. In a discussion one listens to what the other says, and voices stay at a normal level. Both of these conditions change in an argument.

While conflict may be necessary for dramatic effect in movie romances (which is always perfectly resolved within a few minutes), it is neither necessary nor good in a real marriage. Arguing is like playing with fire - sooner or later you get burned.

This is the time in which a couple should certainly seek professional help - not only to help present matters, but also to keep them from getting worse. There is an old adage that says "Not feeling like exercising is a sign that you need exercise." Whenever a couple does not feel like seeking help is a sign that they need to do so.

The difficulty often lies in the fact that they no longer communicate with each other. While it is true that lack of communication may be the single ingredient most often missing on the practical side, it is not only a cause but also an effect. As in other areas, communication is easy in the beginning of a marriage when feelings are high. This is evidenced by both spouses wanting to share their feelings with each other. Part of this sharing is in verbal conversation. When the feelings themselves lessen, the communication about feelings lessens even more. This is a self-protective defense mechanism.

Then there can be a loss of hope, and communication of feelings can stop. When that stops, communications stops. There still may be conversation, but that is only an exchange of information. There is a big difference between conversation and communication. By avoiding attempts at communicating feelings, also avoided is the hurt for having them passed over, ignored, or rebuffed.

If the efforts made during the Reality/Disappointment Period did not bear fruit, the watering stops in this one. There is a loss of hope in "changing" the other person to what you desire, so efforts are only made when the other person gives in a little or effects a temporary change. There may be an acceptance of the status quo, but it is done more with resentment than with a positive attitude.

In the Reality/Disappointment Period, they were disappointed in the fact that the honeymoon was over, but still made efforts to regain it. The lack of success in regaining the newness "thrills" leads

to disappointment in the process of attempting to regain it. At this time, there is discouragement in the thought that they never may regain it again.

The mind remembers the Idealism Period and may fantasize being back in it. This is unrealistic, however, and is detrimental to facing reality. While the husband and the wife both want and need Love, neither one may be willing to give it first.

Because of the Pride of both spouses, neither one will make the first move. It has been said that the opposite of love is not hate - it is indifference. There is certainly the beginnings of indifference in this stage as neither spouse is interested in doing anything to please the other one - at least not start it. If even just one of the spouses has lost hope or is not willing to make the effort of regaining happiness, then nothing will improve.

Indifference is the opposite of Like, which means it is the lack of good feelings. In indifference, each spouse wants to regain Like, but does not know how to go about accomplishing it. Some positive attempts did not work, so the "only" thing left to try is the negative approach. They may say things to each other that they know will be irritating or upsetting. The real goal, however, is to start some kind of communication and somehow reestablish a positive relationship. There is still something there between them, but they no longer "feel" it.

In this Period, the couple still Love each other, but do not Like each other. Many or most of the qualities of Love may still remain, but they are just seldom practiced.

The desire to "feel" what is missing is often the temptation that leads to adultery in this period. Falling into this "mistake," (putting the aspect of sin aside for the moment), is the worst thing possible in preventing an improvement in the marriage from taking place. If adultery takes place during this period, more often than not the adulterer still claims to "love" the spouse. If you truly Love, however, then you would still focus on commitment and faithfulness. Adultery is a betrayal of both of them. It is amazing how many people could never betray their country - but will easily betray their spouse.

If Pride often keeps a couple from admitting their own faults and patching up their differences, it also keeps them from seeking professional advice. While they subconsciously feel like failures, the act of getting professional help brings it to the conscious level where it has to be faced.

The couple individually deciding to "stick it out" for whatever reason seems good enough at the time. While this may be a "leveling-off" time, it is only temporary, as time itself spent in this stage will cause a downward spiral again.

THE BLACK PIT PERIOD

There are two directions in which to go when a couple is in the Non-Effort Period. They either spiritually, mentally, and physically adjust to the reality of marriage with their spouse, and both start working at it - or they find themselves deep in the Black Pit. If the Idealism stage is characterized by the wife sitting next to her husband in the car, and the Reality/Disappointment Period is characterized by sitting on the opposite sides of the front seat, then it is the Black Pit when they do not want to even be in the same car at the same time. If the Idealism Period is marked by wanting to be together all the time, and the Non-Effort Period is marked by wanting some time apart, then the Black Pit is marked by not wanting to be together at all.

In the Idealism Period, the other person is perfect. In the Reality/Disappointment Period, the other person is mostly good. In the Non-Effort Period, the other person's good outweighs the bad. In the Black Pit Period, the other person is rotten. Only the faults are seen, and only the faults are focused on. The biggest shock to couples is not just that they are in this period, but sometimes how fast they got there.

Whatever is seriously wrong in the relationship is considered totally the fault of the other person. Since compromise and working things out was not done in the Non-Effort Period, it is not about to be done here. Not only has all the communication stopped, but also most of the talking. In most cases, it has been replaced by yelling. It is not that there is no expression of feelings, only that the feelings expressed are all bad. No day may pass without some sort of a negative comment. There still may be an emotional attachment, so some kind of feelings exchange must be expressed. Since it is never positive, it will always be negative. This leads to couples fighting about anything and everything. It is like throwing more gasoline onto the fires of negative emotions. This period is when couples give second-degree burns to the feelings of their spouse.

The smallest molehills become the biggest mountains. These fights never settle anything; they only make it worse. There may be indifference in wanting to please the other person, but too often there is not an indifference in wanting to hurt them. It is a case of "I'm hurting, so I want you hurting too." Nagging becomes a big problem. This leads to saying some things that maybe should be said, but not at that time or in that way. This then leads to criticisms and insults in the heat of battle which need not and should not be said - things that will be regretted later. Even when that "later" arrives, Pride may keep the offending person from apologizing. Worse than that, Pride can keep the offended person from forgiving.

It is regrettably true that the most sincere apology possible can only take away the direct hurt itself. The mind can release that through forgiveness, but it always remembers the other person's intention of hurting. It stays in the back of the mind and may always be a point of reference in the future. This situation may never be

completely cured. It can only be prevented by never saying anything negative when upset or angry in the first place.

To not strike back, despite the emotional desire to do so, is one of the qualities of Love. That is why the opposite is evidence of a lack of Love. And if there's anything evident in this stage, it's the lack of any expression of Love.

If the Non-Effort Period is characterized by not seeking help, then the Black Pit is not wanting it. If the Non-Effort Period is evidenced by a couple losing hope, then this one is a period of no hope. If the last period was one of losing sight of intentions, then this one is losing sight of commitment.

The wedding ring, where it once was a treasured symbol of their love, becomes a chain. An early ecclesiastic explained the meaning of a wedding ring: "The form of the ring being circular, that is, round and without end, important thus that mutual love and heartfelt affection shall roundly flow from one to the other, as in a circle, continuously and forever." The circular flow of Love from one spouse to another may have slowed somewhat in the Reality/Disappointment Period, but it comes to a halt in this stage. The only circular flow is one of unhappiness, bitterness and resentment.

The longer the time that a spouse does not have any of their needs met, the greater the chance that there will be an attempt to find them met elsewhere. For some husbands, an attempted solution is to become a "workaholic." For others, it is an excessive amount of time spent with sports or hobbies. For many wives, if they are mothers, it becomes a matter of total involvement with their children. The Love of parents by children is automatic, so mothers can at least get their needs in this one area of Love fulfilled. (It also may allow them the excuse of neglecting their husbands.) Other wives, whether they are mothers or not, spend most of the time "doing good" in belonging to every charitable organization possible. This causes neglect of husband *and* children. Then there are some husbands and wives who turn to alcohol or drugs as a temporary "solution" only finding out the hard way that they are only adding a permanent problem. If any married person considers living in their marriage a form of "hell", let them add alcohol or drugs to the formula and they will get an idea of what Hell really is like.

Another so-called "solution" is to find someone else to supposedly fill your needs. One of those needs is usually in the area of sex. It was mentioned before that most marital problems do not start in the bedroom, but they do end up there. In the Black Pit Period, men may still be interested in sex with their wives because they can separate sex from emotion and still get physically satisfied. For a wife who gets no mental or physical affection, sex becomes only a "duty," and a resented one at that. A wife's willingness may satisfy a husband's sex drive, but her lack of interest in sex does not satisfy a husband's ego. Both then begin to have mental fantasies: the husband for a sex goddess to desire him passionately, and the wife for a knight in shining armor to take her out of the drudgery of her

everyday life. The husband may delve into pornography while the wife may submerge herself in romance novels and soap operas. Both are attempts to mentally return to the Idealism Period (at least in part of the mind), but their idealization is done with someone else in their mind than their spouse. Both want the tingling emotion of "love" again, and because it is no longer there with their spouse, they start to look for it elsewhere.

If the Non-Effort Period was characterized by the hiding of problems from friend and relatives, then the Black Pit is characterized by telling almost everyone within earshot. At least the complaints are made to everyone who is liable to agree with you. The wife will complain about her husband to other wives who complain about their husbands. By the time they get through airing all their gripes, the conclusion is that "All men are selfish and no good." The husband will get together with other husbands and when they finish voicing their gripes the conclusion is that "No woman can be pleased because they do not know what they want." They only seek out people who will automatically take their side. All they want is reinforcement to their own negative emotions, so all they seek is negative reinforcement.

Sometimes entering into the war with full battle gear is the in-laws. Sometimes it is a blind defense of their child despite a complete lack of knowledge as to the real problems that are being faced and the cause of them. Sometimes they take the other side in a subconscious attempt at "getting back at the child" for some real or imaginary hurt. Whatever the side, they are very vocal about it, and every word they say is like throwing gasoline on the fire. The best thing parents can do is stay out of it themselves, and advise seeking professional help. If they say anything at all, it should be positive reinforcement for the vocation of marriage.

Couples do not get positive reinforcement from society which now believes that no couple should stick it out if they no longer "love" each other. Divorce is considered a solution rather than a greater problem. They will certainly not get positive reinforcement from the entertainment industry where adultery is considered one of the standard practices of marriage. They will not get it from friends who are committing adultery or are already divorced. In fact, these "friends" may counsel either adultery or divorce (or both) in a subconscious attempt to get you in the same boat they are in. It's a case of (conscious or subconscious) jealousy. Some people who are committing adultery are just jealous of those who have the morals, principles, and willpower not to commit adultery, and to work at their marriage which they themselves are not doing. Then there are divorced people who are subconsciously jealous of any marriage that lasts. It also may be that both of these groups do not want anyone criticizing them for their actions, and if you are in the same boat, you cannot criticize anyone else in it.

So now we have a couple in misery with almost all outside influences suggesting that instead of accepting the reality of marriage and working at your relationship, it is easier to look elsewhere to have

your needs met - or plan on a divorce.

There is a two-part mental game that goes on at this point. Half of it is convincing yourself that you can have "an affair" without it causing the marriage to end. Regardless of the problems in the marriage, there is a security in the simple fact of being married itself, and the mind may want to keep that. The other half is convincing yourself that adultery is really the fault of your spouse who is not "fulfilling your needs." Adultery is always mental before it is physical and one always withdraws mentally from a spouse before withdrawing physically. The mental effects are felt first, one example being the loss of ability in talking honestly with your spouse. Suppressed guilt always surfaces somewhere.

Another mental step of the adulterer is the attempt to justify it by some excuse in the mind, either before doing it or after. Of course, if the mind justified fornication before marriage, then it is much easier to justify adultery after marriage. Dulling the conscience while committing fornication was a step to dulling the conscience while committing adultery. Since "practice makes perfect", a continual ignoring of your conscience can get it to the point where it only speaks in a whisper - or not at all.

Adultery is based on the same psychological precepts as fornication. The man is looking for exciting sex again with a woman that desires him. This temporarily inflates and satisfies his ego. Ultimately, it may leave him feeling worse than before. Therefore, he convinces himself that something was lacking in the first "mistress," so he tries another. The feeling of physical pleasure can override the feeling of guilt if there is a focus on the first one. A man's mind will always allow him to rationalize away adultery much easier than a woman's. The woman, just as in fornication, is looking for "love" and falsely thinks she can find it in adulterous sex. She even feels emptier as a result of adultery than a man.

Of course, all during this time (as well as preceding it) is the stream of movies at theaters and on television that proclaim that adultery does not hurt a marriage. More often than not, it supposedly helps a marriage, or even saves it. Occasionally adultery is shown to not be practical, but it is never shown to be immoral. While a failed affair may jolt a few people back to their marriage as a true priority in their life, it is the worst way (as well as a wrong way) for this to be accomplished. And while the adulterer may regain an interest in the marriage, it may destroy that same interest in the spouse. It causes one to wonder if the writers and producers of these movies promoting adultery are the classic examples of those with jealousy that resent moral people and their working at their marriages.

As stated previously, fornication before marriage does not always guarantee an inclination to adultery after marriage, but it does make it much easier for the conscience to justify. If sex outside of marriage (before marriage) was a trivial thing, then sex outside of marriage (after marriage) will also be considered trivial. Those who *play* before marriage find it easier to *stray* after marriage. Those who marry as virgins find adultery a very hard step indeed.

Out of all the influences that lead to adultery, the one that is least recognized is that of the practice of artificial birth control. However, when the first purpose of sex (procreation) is denied, then it is much easier for the second purpose of sex (the unitive factor between husband and wife) to also be denied. When sex is separated from both meanings, it becomes nothing more than an animal act to satisfy animal passions. Obviously, at this time, there is nothing left to the relationship.

Artificial birth control is a cause that is not even recognized by most professional marriage counselors. That is because they do not operate from the consideration of marriage as a sacred institution which must follow God's immutable Laws about it in order for it to be successful. They only look at marriage as a practical institution in which *happiness* is not just an ideal, but the only end product to be strived for and attained. Therefore, if it cannot be attained after a few practical efforts, then the "only solution" to them is a divorce. These counselors will not tell couples that satisfying your own temporary emotions is a poor substitution for obedience to God's Laws.

If the number 10 represents the death of a marriage, it usually has to be dying on a level of 8 before any professional help is sought. If it is the kind of counseling that ignores God's Plan for marriage, then it may temporarily turn the marriage back to a 6 or 7. Too often it returns to 8, more counseling is bypassed (it did not work) and so it goes to 9 and ends up in 10 - a divorce.

Even if a marriage does not end up at the biggest failure of 10 (a divorce), if it stays at 9 (the Black Pit) - it is certainly not considered a "success," or "happy."

HOW TO REPAIR A "BAD" MARRIAGE

While this book was written more to prevent "bad marriages" than to save them, the same principles that can insure a good marriage can also be used to save a bad one. Anyone in a bad marriage will almost always be living in the Black Pit Period.

The first thing that is always necessary to save a bad marriage (or one that is heading in that direction) is a willingness on both persons to work at it. There are more adjustments to make (and a longer time to make them) for a couple that has been in the Black Pit Period for years, than one that has just recently entered it. This chapter is for couples who have been in it for years, and what will likely happen if they stay in it with no change.

The first thing absolutely necessary for an improvement in a "bad marriage" is for both persons to have that desire, and absolutely necessary for both to be willing to put that desire into essential actions. It is another way of saying that if the marriage vows were not practiced starting from the beginning of the marriage (as evidenced by what has happened since) then they had better start being practiced now. Otherwise, any temporary intentions and actions simply meant to improve one's own physical and mental state of life is only doomed to failure. Also, if only one person is committed to the full meaning and application of the vows, failure is still inevitable - it just takes a little longer.

Let us assume that both spouses want to do what is right and necessary to improve the marriage, or in actuality, to make it a true marriage for the first time. If so, then they must both start practicing the principles as expounded in these chapters.

Since they are already living together, and in most cases have children, some adjustments are obviously necessary. While the basic principles of the spiritual, mental, and physical hierarchy of values remain the same, there are some practical applications under the present circumstances which may also help.

If they are to truly gain and encourage a good total base for their marriage, it might be a good idea to bypass sex for a short time. Not only does this prevent the increased emotion of sex from "making up" which could encroach on and possibly overcloud the new mental and spiritual meanings which need to be brought to their relationship, but it allows the watering and cultivation of affection back into their marriage. While there is no set time that would be appropriate for all couples, it should be decided in advance - both a minimum and a maximum time. It could be a one-month minimum to a three-month maximum. The sexual pleasure "lost" during this time will be more than made up for in a hundred ways (including sexual pleasure) in the future. While separate bedrooms may not be necessary to accomplish this, separate beds would probably be better.

Even when sex is resumed, it should be on a semi-regular basis - still with separate beds for a while. This not only still accomplishes the first objective, but it continues the desire and anticipation for the other person. The spontaneity of "anytime sex" should be reserved for when sex is truly giving, that is, when one's desire to give pleasure is at least as equal as one's desire to receive it.

This could take care of most of the adjustments of the physical side of already being married. At the same time, it is a way of not allowing a renewal of the physical to overshadow the more needed and more difficult adjustments and changes in the couples' spiritual and mental lives. This is only to help couples keep in mind what has been said before that married Love is also a union of Souls and minds in God, not just a union of bodies in bed.

There is another physical adjustment that is often helpful - and sometimes necessary. That is a separation of bed and board. When the emotional relationship is so negative that a couple constantly get on each other's nerves to the point of incessant fighting over the smallest matters, it may be time for a physical separation in order to calm the emotions and allow reason back into their lives and their relationship. This separation can be very positive in that it allows each spouse to make a re-evaluation of priorities. What was the reason to get married in the first place? What were our ambitions and goals of our married life? Did the routine and problems of daily life help us to lose sight of them? Were our expectations too high?

The answers should be centered on "What can *I* do to get our marriage back on track," rather than concentrating on what your spouse needs to do. In most cases, the latter is what helped cause it to get off track in the first place - waiting for the other person to change, or the other person to be giving, or the other person to communicate, or the other person to sacrifice.

The separation will be positive when the focus is on how to use the separation for good effect in setting up the easing of the tensions that have built up the negative outlook and actions. It is positive when that is used to establish a fresh start in communication and problem-solving. It is positive when the purpose is to get back together with a better relationship through a renewed commitment to Love. It is positive when it is a step backward from living with your spouse, while still looking at the long-term goal of the marriage.

A separation is negative when it is a step backward - by turning in the opposite direction of the marriage. That is the situation when the separation is used as an excuse to "date" others. This is not the way to regain positive emotions with your spouse. This is not the way to honestly face personal improvements and changes that need to be made. It is usually only a mechanism of Pride, which allows the person to continually blame their spouse for everything and not face their own faults. It is also an attempt for sympathy: "My wife does not understand me," or "My husband does not show me any love."

Even when an initial separation is not made with divorce in mind, dating others is the single most influential factor of moving in that direction. The outcome of mentally moving away from a spouse when dating while being separated (even without sex) is even more than having an "affair" when living together.

Since the physical and mental are so absolutely intertwined, physical changes and improvements can set up mental improvements. And mental changes and improvements certainly help the physical situation. The mental improvements involve each spouse developing new qualities and practicing the ones already held to a greater degree. As an example, if one is already 70% patient, then 75% should be aimed for - and then 80% and so on. While we will never reach perfection on this planet, we should always be striving for it. Mental improvements always are based on a change in attitude. While we can never force a change in someone else's attitude, we can always forment a change in our own.

It was mentioned earlier how it might irritate a wife if her husband did not pick-up his clothes, or it irritates a husband when his wife does not keep the bathroom counter clean. The ideal solution would be for both of them to improve 100% in this area. However, we are talking about human beings and being realistic, here, so that will probably never happen. The wife improves her whole mental life when she can simply pick up her husband's clothes without griping (if she cannot stand to see them out) or just leave them there - also without griping. The husband improves his whole mental outlook when he simply works around her stuff in the bathroom without

gripping, or just pushes it aside enough for his stuff - also without griping. The point is that we make our own life better when our whole attitude is not based on either the lack of positive words and actions of others, or the presence of negative words and actions of others.

The only way to cultivate this self-healing attitude - with resulting peace of mind - is through spiritual improvements. The basis for permanency is the *attitude* necessary for improvements, the *willingness* necessary to work at them, and the *constancy* of the attempts. This must be continued regardless of having some repeated failures. It is the basis for the regeneration of the commitment of the vows.

Spiritual improvements would include (but not be limited to) going to church on Sunday. G. K. Chesterton said, "Sitting in a church does not make you a Christian anymore than sitting in a garage makes you a car." One hour in church on Sunday is not the only requirement for a spiritual life or a spiritual relationship; it only forms a base for it. Religion is not something that should exist only in a church. Religious principles need to be practiced in our daily lives, and if that does not exist within the family, it will probably not exist anywhere else.

Too many people want to ignore God and His Will regarding marriage, and then in times of problems, expect one prayer to make God cause a miracle to happen. God is then supposed to be a dispensing machine: insert one prayer and get one favor; insert two prayers and receive two favors. While the Bible does say "Ask and you shall receive," it does not have the phrase "anything you want" or the word "instantly" at the end of the sentence. God may very well delay answering even a multitude of prayers in order to find out if the prayers are really for the Love of God and His Will, or just "gimme" prayers. There is also the truth that "We should pray to God as if it all depends on Him, but work like it all depends on us."

In the questioning of couples who have been happily married for many years, numerous reasons have been given for their success. Four answers seem to be mentioned repeatedly. It is not surprising that two of them would be in a spiritual category, "Marriage is sacred" and "Long-term commitment", and the other two would be in a mental category: "Being best friends" and "Respect for each other." Neither the physical category: "sex," nor the emotional category: "in love" even places in the top ten.

What happens in troubled or bad marriages is that these four are 1) not practiced, and then 2) forgotten. Short-term negative emotions cloud the view of the future of long-term commitments. They also cloud the view of the positive past in a relationship.

At the time of a wedding, a couple is always "best friends." This fact gets lost in principle and then in action over a period of time. It needs to be brought back into focus. Why was my spouse my best friend? When did that change? Why did it change? How can I make my spouse my best friend again?

Often the answer is found in the second statement in that category: "Respecting each other." Is it the fact of not showing respect for my spouse? Has that been a reaction to respect not being shown to me? Ask yourself honestly, would I talk to my best friend of the same sex the way I talk to my spouse? Would I treat them the same? If the answer is "No, because they would not be a best friend for very long," then you need to take a good long look in the mirror for the source of most of your marital problems. Do you treat your best friends of the same sex better because you know that they are not committed to be your best friend, and that ill-treatment will cause you to lose their friendship?

Be honest with yourself: Do you talk with more kindness and consideration to

strangers, acquaintances, and friends of the opposite sex than your own spouse? If "Yes," you again may just have found the cause of most of your problems.

Do you treat your spouse worse because of the commitment - instead of better? Is it because you take your spouse for granted and not your other friends? The old saying, "You have to be a friend to have a friend" means you must show respect for others for it to be shown to you. That saying could also be paraphrased for married couples to be "You have to be a good spouse to have a good spouse." (The first does not always guarantee the second - but it certainly helps it to occur).

With good friends, only a mental connection is necessary. With a good spouse, there is also a physical connection - "chemistry," and a spiritual connection - commitment. In a troubled or bad marriage, all three connections seem to be frayed.

No marriage ever started out as a troubled or "bad marriage." It has to develop into that. If we define a "troubled" marriage as a basically good one that is onset with serious problems, then we could define a "bad" marriage as one that was basically a mistake from the beginning.

"Bailing out" of a bad marriage, however, is not the easy solution it may seem. Even if a particular couple marrying each other was a mistake, their intentions in marrying were good - and the same in both of them. Those intentions were to be married, raise a family, and be happy. If they have children, then they already have the first two, and only have to work on the third.

No matter how good a relationship is at the time of a wedding, it will always - ALWAYS - need work after marriage. A "bad" marriage just takes more work than a good one.

Even the mistake of marrying the "wrong" person is not rectified by the bigger mistake of getting a divorce. It always seems like an easy solution. It is a change in daily life which gives the mind a temporary release. It also allows the mind to idealize meeting another Prince Charming or a Cinderella and living "happily ever after" in a second marriage. This fairy tale thinking is proven by the statistic that the average time between divorce and remarriage is less than 2 1/2 years. This idealism of the mind ignores the fact that while more than one-third of first marriages fail, second marriages fail at a rate of over 70%. The rate for divorce in second would be even higher if couples did not stay together for 1) financial reasons, 2) sex reasons, or 3) Pride reasons. (If the first marriage was a failure through the fault of the other person, who gets the blame for the second failure?)

Even if second marriages "succeed," there is the everlasting problem of children having step-fathers or step-mothers, step-brothers and step-sisters, step-cousins and step-grandparents. This compounds the problem of identity, and does not really give children the security that is lost when their parents split-up. Of course, this "only" affects the children physically and mentally until they leave home, and "only" psychologically for a lifetime. What is that to consider compared to their mother vainly seeking a Prince Charming or their father vainly seeking a Cinderella? Who comes first here, anyway?

A mother and a father who divorce (whether they remarry or not) should at least be honest and tell their children that they come second. They should not tell their children "I love you more than anyone or anything in this world." That is a lie. The truth is, "I want what I want, and if you can be happy with that, then that is fine. If not - tough." Children certainly realize that this is their parents' philosophy. Not admitting it only makes it worse. (And buying children expensive gifts or taking them to special places or events may ease the father or mother's conscience, but it does not change the unhappiness that their children feel at all times except during these

temporary high emotional activities.)

The above is only considering some practical effects. The bottom line is the spiritual effect. If legal divorce and remarriage is against God's Plan for the family, then no one gets any credit from God whether an illicit second marriage succeeds or not. Neither being "happy" in an adulterous second marriage nor unhappy in an adulterous second marriage gains any grace from God. "Working" at an illicit marriage also does not gain grace from God. That only comes from working at a marriage which is approved by God.

God did not create feelings and emotions first and then marriage as a place in which to put them. He created the institution of marriage and the family as the basic unit of society in His world, and then, because of the difficulty of that vocation, added the presence (or possibility) of good feelings and emotions.

When we allow those emotions to rule our lives, we make regrettable decisions with regrettable consequences. If marriage was a "mistake" from positive emotions, then divorce is a bigger mistake made from negative emotions.

Neither the absence of romantic feelings at the time of a wedding, nor an absence of them anytime afterwards, invalidates the solemn vows that were pledged to each other before God.

The time for choice is before you get married - on whether or not to make the commitment. Once you choose to make the commitment and get married, there is no longer a choice on whether or not to live up to that commitment. One of the first things we are going to have to answer for on Judgment Day is how well we lived our vocation - and especially our vows. Neither "feelings" nor "situation ethics" will count for anything at that time.

It is certainly reasonable to our emotions to want to be happy on earth - especially in a marriage. It is certainly understandable to our emotions to want "out" of an unhappy situation - especially a marriage. As stated before, emotions should only be a result of our actions - they should not to be the starting point for them.

The starting point for all of our attitudes - and resulting actions - should be Faith, Hope and Charity. Getting married can be like walking into a deep dark tunnel which has blinding morning sunlight at the entrance (emotion of the wedding) which keeps you from seeing what is up ahead. After entering the tunnel, the eyes adjust and the road and the darkness seem endless because the tunnel is long and winding, and no light can be seen at the end of it. By keeping step with Faith, looking forward with Hope, and continuing to move forward with Charity, those three lights allow couples to preserve in their walking forward together (with occasional stumbles) toward the evening sunlight at the end of the tunnel - the softer light of true Love.

Without Faith, Hope, and Charity, the usual "solution" to a troubled or bad marriage is the coward's escape hatch - a divorce.

DIVORCE: A SOLUTION OR A GREATER PROBLEM?

There is an old joke that the biggest cause of divorce is marriage. There is some truth to it, in that without any marriages, there could be no divorces. That "some truth" is even less because it means only legal marriages and legal divorces. The avoidance of a legal marriage does not mean the prevention of all break-ups, with the resulting hurt, rejection and loneliness. The break-up of people cohabiting includes all the same negative ramifications except the legal ones.

There are more than two million marriages every year in this country, and more than one million divorces during the same time period. This does not mean - as is sometimes quoted - that one out of every two marriages end in divorce. To be that, all of one year's divorces would have to come out of the previous year's marriages. At the same time, some of these divorces are coming after 10 or 20 years of marriage, and that is not a good statistic either. Figuring in the break-up of the couples living together as well as those legally married, the break-up percentage would probably be closer to three out of every four.

Still, just considering the ones who make it to the stage of actual marriage, the divorce rate is exceedingly high, even if it is "only" more than one out of three. This figure comes from the actual statistics that one-third of all first marriages end in divorce within the first five years after marriage. Couples are splitting up at that rate despite pledging "undying love" for each other only a few short months or years earlier.

Was not every couple, without exception, happy on their wedding day? Did not every couple, without exception, want to stay happy? Did not every couple, without exception, expect to have a happy marriage, or would never have said, "till death do us part?"

The "I'll love you forever" did not seem to last. Either the definition of "forever" was shortened considerably, or there was something missing in their "love" for each other, or the marriage vows were only meant "till a lessening of emotion do us part." More than likely it was a combination of all three. The point is that the couples suffering the humiliation of a failed marriage had the same hopes and expectations of the couples that are still together. At one time, most divorces took place during the Black Pit Period. Some took place in the Non-Effort Period because of a lack of sincerity and willingness to accept this period as one in which both people must work at adjustment. This takes acceptance of what you cannot and should not try to change in your spouse, and also the maturity to change in yourself what can and should be changed.

Now, because of a total lack of commitment, a good many marriages break up in the Reality/Disappointment Period. It should not be assumed, however, that the marriages that are still intact are necessarily happy marriages. Many of them are not good marriages, but have just not gotten to the Black Pit Period yet, or have been in that stage long enough for divorce to be considered and then acted upon. Some couples are staying married because of social reasons, because of financial reasons, or because of security reasons. The sacrifice of staying together "because of the children" has become rare. While any or all of these may keep a couple together, they will not in themselves make the marriage happy. (And if either of the couple falls "into emotion" or "into passion" with someone else, even these reasons go out the window.)

During this most crucial first five years, married love must be reinforced daily

from inside the union, because it is certainly not reinforced from the outside. The wrong definition of Love, as held by the entire entertainment industry as a prelude to marriage, does not change when they portray marriage itself. The main focus was on being "sexually compatible" during courtship, and the main focus in on "sexual satisfaction" when married. Society has picked up on this "not seeing the forest for the trees" and unfortunately, there are many marriage counselors who suggest a "better sexual relationship" as the main cure to any problems. As stated previously, while it is true that problems in other areas surface in the bedroom, they are seldom the main problem - or where it started. It is just that unresolved problems naturally affect the emotions, and negative emotions make the wife less interested in sex. The husband, being less emotionally involved with sex, does not even consider being mad at each other, or not talking to each other, as any reason not to have sex.

At that time, the unitive factor is also no longer there. Both spouses feel unfulfilled sexually and this often is the first thing that surfaces with a counselor. A counselor with a lack of understanding of the true cause of their problems (probably based on his own lack of correct philosophy about marriage in the first place) focuses on this complaint and suggests "solutions" in the area of sex. When these fail, as they inevitably will despite any temporary effect, this kind of counselor may have nothing else to suggest but divorce as "the answer."

Unfortunately, our modern society has accepted divorce as a "solution", and not the problem that it really is. There is no longer any scandal to divorce, and our court system continues to make it easier and easier. At one time, divorce was not even legal. Then it became so under very stringent conditions. Then the conditions were made more lenient, but the time period for getting one was long. At present, a fast divorce is right up there with other modern conveniences such as fast food restaurants. Many modern marriages could be called "microwave marriages" because they heat up fast and cool down fast. The next step of our seemingly God-less court system could be marriage contracts with built-in option features - a no-fault divorce clause that automatically kicks in after a year or two unless extended in writing.

Couples are already writing their own "vows," including stating the conditions under which they will stay married. One example is "as long as we love each other." That couple might as well save time and money and prepare their divorce papers at the same time as the marriage license, because they will probably get to use them before the ink is very dry on the latter.

The concept of easy divorce is a modern one, and is more prevalent in America than anywhere else. As a historical reference, between 1715 and 1852 in England, there was an average of only two divorces a year. They were not easy or cheap. When they are, it is of little importance to choose the "right" person and properly prepare for marriage. It is also not necessary to have to work at a marriage to make it succeed.

Our culture no longer considers marriage to have a sacred character, and one that is to be contracted for life. It once held this distinction even among those who did not consider themselves religious. We now see more and more marriages contracted in unusual settings: while skydiving, riding a roller coaster, or scuba diving. Maybe they subconsciously believe or expect their marriage to be as exciting as the wedding ceremony.

Most couples marry today with the idea that "If it does not work out, we will get a divorce." They still even say the words "till death do us part," but evidently it is more of a hope than a promise. It is that mental reservation to the commitment - the "escape hatch" of divorce that sets up in advance the actions and reactions that lead to divorce.

If divorce is even a possibility in the mind of just one of the couple at the time of the wedding, the odds are that the marriage will end in a divorce. The mind always takes the path of least resistance. Some marriages last simply because the woman feels that the security of a bad marriage is better than living alone, and the man thinks that sex with his wife is better than no sex at all. That is not a good enough reason to get married in the first place, and is not a good enough of a reason to enjoy staying married afterwards.

There is only one action for a couple to not only prevent a break-up at a later date, but to be happily married in the meantime. That one way is a total commitment to God and to the other person: to believe, to practice, and to work at the living out of the marriage vows over the course of the rest of your life.

It is an interesting paradox of human nature that we tend to avoid the very thing that makes our life better. Children grow up spending half their time trying to get out of (or at least postpone) obeying parents. If children simply did what they were told, when they were told to do it, their life would be so much better. They would not constantly have to be corrected (which they do not like) and would not have to be punished (which they like even less). There would be more harmony in the whole family, which makes the whole atmosphere of living in that family more positive. With a constant effort at just following their own will, children can make life more difficult for everyone. The ones who are hurt the most, though, are themselves. If they simply obeyed instead of spending so much mental energy trying to avoid it, the pressure of constantly having to be obstinate is removed, and their mental energy can be focused in a positive direction.

This same principle is continued in adulthood, with one example being the spending of half of one's time trying to avoid work. Instead of just concentrating on doing your job to the best of your ability for the length of the work day, it is a constant mental challenge to some people to either slow down and accomplish less than what should be, or avoid work whenever the boss's back is turned. More mental energy is spent in trying to get out of work than would be spent in actually working.

It is like the student who spends six hours trying to figure out ways to cheat on an exam, instead of spending the six hours studying for it. It is like the crook who spends a month working out plans for a robbery to get him the money to allow him not to have to work the next month.

The same thing is true about commitment in marriage. The person who wants the benefit of the security of marriage but is afraid of making a commitment is like a carpenter who wants to build a sturdy floor, but does not want to use any nails. And a person who gets married without making a *permanent* commitment is like putting a floor down with nails, but without any supports underneath. It will hold up for awhile, but will eventually fail under the repeated weight of heavy footsteps.

In marriage, there is the repeated weight of personality conflicts, differences of opinion, and small and large problems. Without the support of a permanent commitment, there will be a weakening of the vows, and more than likely, a collapse of the marriage permanently. Every time there is a problem, the mind is in a mental conflict as to which is easier: to work at a solution to the problem - or separation and divorce. To stay married, the mind has to constantly make a conscious choice to choose the first option. This is easier in the beginning of a marriage when emotion is higher. As positive emotion goes down and negative emotion goes up, it is more difficult to make the decision in favor of the first option.

Also, the more times the mind has to make an actual decision of staying together, the more difficult it becomes. The mind starts asking the next question as

to which is easier: to continue to climb up the rocky mountain of marriage - or to take a slide down the mountain into the valley of divorce? Since the end of each is unknown, the mind thinks of the means of each, and sliding down seems easier than climbing up. What is forgotten is that their original purpose is to get to the top of the mountain of security and happiness, and taking the slide is going in the opposite direction.

It is another case similar to children avoiding obedience, and by doing so making their lives much harder. We are all children of God, and He has set up rules for us to make our life easier and happier for us if we follow them. God's commands to us are neither arbitrary nor repressive. They are only restraints placed on the weakness of our human nature for our own good in the long run. Gluttony is not a sin because God does not want us to enjoy the taste of food. It is to prevent health problems. God does not forbid fornication and adultery because He does not want us to enjoy the pleasure of sex. It is to prevent marriage problems. God has the best foresight and hindsight than all the human beings who have ever lived put together. If people simply followed His laws and regulations concerning marriage, the family, and everything else - 99% of all the problems in the world would disappear. For that to be accomplished, people would have to follow His Commandments without mentally adding "If I feel like it" to the end of each one.

Since God does not write his rules about marriage or anything else across the sky with stars, it is necessary to listen to His representatives on Earth who are responsible for passing them onto us. In general, that means following the Holy Bible, the inspired Word of God. This is where organized religion comes in - each individual church, of course, claiming to be the "one, true religion."

Different Christian churches have anything from very similar to very different views concerning marriage, depending on their interpretation of the New Testament. Since religions define the sacredness of the institution of marriage, it is worthwhile to examine some of the different religious beliefs concerning marriage.

The Catholic Church, the oldest Christian religion, believes that marriage is a sacrament instituted by Christ to give grace. (Grace is a supernatural help from God given to us in an aid to living a good life according to His Laws, and to gain Heaven at the end of this life.) For Catholics, marriage is a permanent commitment to God, as well as to each other, and these sacramental vows can only be broken by death.

These beliefs come from Christ's teachings on marriage. When He was questioned about divorce, and reminded that Moses had allowed divorce, He said,

"By reason of the hardness of your heart he wrote you that commandment. But from the beginning of Creation, God made them male and female. 'For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' Therefore, now they are no longer two, but one flesh. What, therefore, God has joined together, let no man put asunder." (Mark 10:5-9)

As with many things that Christ taught, it was not popular because it required a stricter standard than they had been practicing. So his disciples asked him again about this - evidently hoping He would either change His mind or at least allow some kind of exceptions. Any hopes in this direction were dashed when He explained,

"Whoever puts away his wife and marries another, commits adultery against her; and if the wife puts away her husband, and marries another, she commits adultery."

(Mark 10:11-12)

This would seem to make it very clear and very definite.

This is repeated in Luke 16:18. St. Paul also reiterates these teachings in Romans 7:2 and 1 Corinthians 7:10.

Since Protestantism started some 400 years ago and has fragmented into hundreds of different sects, divorce and remarriage has been allowed by them under a change in the interpretation of Matthew 5:32, where Christ says:

"But I say to you that anyone who puts his wife away, save an account of immorality, causes her to commit adultery,..."

This certainly points to Christ justifying separation from bed and board for immorality (and legal divorce), but not remarriage - as evidenced by the rest of the verse:

"and he who marries a woman who has been put away commits adultery."

That Christ did not mean to allow remarriage even after this one exception for divorce is evidenced by the verses previously quoted. Any other interpretation seems to suggest that one or both spouses commit adultery so that they can conveniently divorce and remarry. While the wording may be somewhat different, there can be no contradiction in the meanings of Mark 10:11-12 and Matthew 5:32 quoted above.

These are Protestant ministers who do follow the whole of the New Testament's teachings on the forbidding of remarriage, and not just that one verse which is sometimes quoted to justify it. They do not remarry divorced persons in their church, but this is up to their individual conscience as there is no church-wide prohibition against it. Since private interpretation of the Bible is allowed or encouraged, each person may have their own beliefs concerning marriage, divorce and remarriage.

The Jewish religion, following only the Old Testament, tends to be even more lenient on divorce and remarriage. It is allowed even if a couple cannot get along. Like Protestants, they too proclaim that marriage should be forever. Their second and third marriages even include the words "till death do us part."

For a Catholic, a divorce is only a legal document with legal implications, such as the split of community property, custody of any children, and the question of alimony. A legally divorced Catholic is still married in the eyes of the Church, and remarriage is forbidden under the sin of adultery.

The only way a Catholic may morally remarry a second time (besides the death of a spouse) is if the first marriage is annulled. An annulment is a decree that the first marriage was not a sacramental marriage in the first place because of some impediment to that which was not known to the Church at the time. These impediments can be physical, such as if one of the parties had never been baptized, or was forced into marriage - or mental, such as if one had the intention to never have any children, or was incapable of making the necessary lifetime commitment for a sacramental marriage. For any of these impediments to be considered legitimate, there is a lengthy investigative process in which it must be proved that the impediment existed at the time of the wedding.

Because of the proliferation of annulments in recent years, it has been scurrilously referred to as the "Catholic form of divorce." Undoubtedly, there has been abuse in this area by some marriage tribunals. The Church has tightened its regulations in this area by requiring that all cases in which an annulment is granted by a local marriage tribunal, must now be submitted to another higher tribunal for final verification. It is interesting to note that the Catholic Church considers a marriage between two Protestants in their own church, or two Jews in a synagogue, to also be a sacrament. Therefore, a Catholic could not marry a divorced Protestant or divorced

Jew unless a Catholic marriage tribunal annulled their marriage under the same valid conditions.

As plain as the Bible is regarding divorce and remarriage, it obviously does not cover every moral question that has come up in the last 1900 years since it was written. Therefore, unless one believes that God has either abandoned everyone since that time, or allowed everyone to do whatever they want, there has to be an earthly authority that God continually inspires in order that his immutable laws on morality are perpetually followed. Enter organized religion again.

An example of a moral question not covered by the Bible is the dispute over the morality of artificial birth control. Since the Catholic Church has the strictest regulations concerning both the preparation for marriage and any valid remarriage, it is not surprising that they also have the strictest laws concerning moral conduct in marriage itself. In fact, it is the only church that outright condemns artificial birth control under all conditions and all circumstances. It does so because of its belief that there is a twofold purpose of marriage: 1) the procreation, rearing, and education of children, and 2) the mutual assistance of the spouses and the satisfaction of the sex drive.

Artificial birth control separates the two previously stated purposes of sexual intercourse in marriage (the procreative factor and the unitive factor) and elevates sex to an end in itself without regard to God's purpose in creating it. This has been taught by all Popes who have had recourse to this question, and as it is believed that since they are all successors to St. Peter, the first Pope, they are the highest teaching authority in Christ's Church. They have all taught this despite its unpopularity among, not only non-Catholics, but even among lay Catholics, many priests, and even some bishops. As usual, it always comes down to the old problem of obedience.

The Catholic Church, through the Pope, has always been consistent in its strictness concerning the laws of marriage. In one very notable case, the Pope refused to give King Henry VIII a divorce, so he started his own religion - which, of course, then allowed it. In more recent times, Pope Pius XI in 1930 wrote, "Divorce, which is born of the perverted morals of a people, and leads, as experience shows, to vicious habits in public and private life, is particularly opposed to the well-being of the family and of the state... Once divorce is allowed, there will be no sufficient means of keeping it in check within any definable bounds."

Pope Paul VI, in 1968 wrote more specifically on the performance of marriage. "The marriage reality, on the juridical plane, subsists independently of love and persists even if love is extinguished... The spouses, in giving their free consent, enter into and insert themselves into an objective order, within an institution which transcends them and which does not depend on them for its existence or its laws. Marriage is not created by the free will of men, but was instituted by God."

While he did maintain a belief in the "irreplaceable function" of love within a marriage, he still insisted that marriage is "an irrevocable commitment" which "once sealed, is no longer at the mercy of the ups and downs of human will which is subjective, changeable, and unstable."

Are these unreasonable positions? The effects of divorce are easily seen and understood because of its effects on families in specific and society in general.

The permanence of the sacrament of marriage does not depend on how you feel about it today, compared to how you felt about it last week, or last month, or last year.

CHILDREN

There is a direct high correlation between the philosophy of a couple concerning marriage, and their philosophy concerning children.

Children are the natural fruit of Love in a good marriage. If Love in marriage does not grow, it will eventually wither and die. The most basic way for it to grow is through the mutual Love shown in bringing new life into the world, and the mutual Love shown in making the sacrifices necessary to nourish this life from birth to adulthood and beyond.

If a couple is not ready to have children for financial or any other reason (and whether this reason is valid or not) then they are not ready to get married in the first place. This means that married couples in Love should actually plan to have children as a product of that Love as soon as possible. It is also important to note that children are the main ingredient for bringing newness into the repetition of married life, both for now with their own children, and in the future with their grandchildren.

Whenever conception does take place (whether planned or not) it has to be welcomed as a gift from God with a willing and loving acceptance of the baby that has been produced by the Loving act between spouses. That is what comprises the spiritual element of the act of sexual intercourse between a husband and wife. Every child conceived does not have to be "planned" in order for God to expect that child to be loved as much as one that is planned. If God's Will was for only "planned" children to be accepted and loved, then there would somehow be two kinds of sexual intercourse: one for procreation and one for the unitive factor. The fact that it is not separated by nature -and has only been separated by modern science with drugs and man-made contraceptive devices - only accentuates the artificiality of separating the two functions. (It should also be mentioned that some of the best things in life are unplanned: spontaneous activities, meeting new friends, unexpected good fortune, and children.)

One's love of children, even your own, is based on whether you believe children are a burden or a blessing. If they are a burden, then it might even be convenient to kill them before they are born. If the "burden" children are allowed to be born, they usually become more of a possession, one that can be ignored or put aside (let someone else take care of them) whenever it is not convenient. If they are a burden, then there certainly is no desire to have more than two - "a boy for the father and a girl for the mother." This satisfies the paternal and maternal instincts without having to give up the drive, ambition, and time spent in the main pursuit of greater materialistic comforts and wealth.

At the same, some couples claim to not want any children at all. This would seem to suggest that they do not have any maternal or paternal instincts. They disparagingly refer to children as "rug rats," "brats," or some other derogatory term. In most of these cases, however, you will hear them refer to their dog or cat as their "baby." It sounds even more ludicrous to hear them say to the dog or cat, "Come see Daddy," or even "Tell Mama what you did while she was gone." Denying the true maternal and paternal instincts can work for awhile - but hardly ever works for life.

To really Love children, it is necessary to be selfless. To have children, they must be considered more important than material possessions. To raise them properly, time spent with them must take precedence over personal pursuits. While couples who wed should be mature enough for both marriage and parenthood, it is not rare for a baby to be the catalyst in the necessary step of maturity that makes a marriage

succeed. It has been said that "A child is the only known substance from which a responsible adult can be made."

Responsible parenthood necessarily elevates the amount of Love and sacrifice in a marriage. In the past, children have always been considered a binding force in marriage, but with the modern emphasis on "Me first," any consideration of children is often relegated to an *also-ran* category. No longer do couples stay together and work out problems "for the sake of the children." That was a case of permanent reason (acting for the best present and future interests of the children), overruling temporary emotion (what we feel like doing now). The Love of the children was stronger than the temporary dislike of the spouse. Unselfishness toward the children could then lead to unselfishness toward the spouse. The amount of Love shown by each spouse in regard to the happiness of their children may not have guaranteed their happiness with each other, but it certainly guaranteed more happiness for all concerned than a divorce would bring.

There is a saying that "The best thing a father can do for his children is love their mother." Of course, the reverse is also true, that "The best thing a mother can do for her children is to love their father." With the prevailing negative situation of so many bad or neglectful parents, it is more important than ever for children to be set good examples by their own parents. While they can learn about what makes a bad marriage by the wrong example of their parents, it would be much better to learn about what makes a good marriage from the good example of their parents. It would be much better to learn how to be happy through clean living, than learn that unhappiness is a result of alcoholism or drug abuse.

It is again a false choice to ask what is better for children: a) living in a house with both parents in a hostile environment, or b) living in a broken home. While the first situation definitely hurts children, it does not cause the devastation of a divorce.

The correct choice, however, is seldom mentioned, and that is c) that including God into the marriage, making compromises, and working at the relationship leads to a successful marriage and a happy home. Children are helped - not hurt - by seeing their parents working through the problems of their relationship as they occur over the course of their marriage. It helps them mentally prepare for the realities of their own marriage one day when they see that "romantic infatuation" is not the basis of a good marriage.

Parents continually tell their children that they Love them and that their happiness comes first. Then many turn around, put their own selfish feelings first, and get a divorce. One woman claimed that she got a divorce because her husband was gone every other night and did not spend enough time with their children. She got full custody and he then only got to spend time with them every other weekend. How did that increase his time with his children? How did they benefit?

Parents who claim to put their children first, and then get a divorce, may be able to fool themselves, but not their children. The children see a divorce as a betrayal of any Love that is there - or simply see the claim of "love" as a lie.

Dr. Armand Nicholi, a psychiatrist, has said that time does *not* heal the wounds of divorce in children. A spouse who finds another person to get involved with may have their own emotional needs satisfied - at least temporarily. The children, however, do not have recourse to that same solution. There are any number of people of the opposite sex an adult can become emotionally involved with - but only one set of parents can fit that requirement for a child.

Regardless of your beliefs on marriage and children, it is a historical fact that those who follow the strictest laws of morality in marriage, who do not believe in

divorce, and who are willing to make the sacrifices necessary for large families have the strongest marriages and the happiest families.

It is false to think that without divorce, the whole society is filled with bad marriages and miserable families. Quite the contrary is true. A few years ago, an American journalist traveled to Ireland, where divorce is illegal, to report on the amount of unhappy marriages as a result of "being forced to stay married." He was surprised to find out that families in general were much happier than those in the United States. The reason should be obvious. Where divorce is not an easy option, couples both go into marriage with a lifetime commitment. That commitment should not include simply the attempt to make your spouse "happy", but also the working for the salvation of each other's Soul, and the Souls of your children, through your permanent vocation as spouses and parents.

The extension of the goals and responsibilities of marriage actually takes pressure off of the notion that you have to be "happy" at every given moment, or that your only responsibility is to make your spouse "happy" at every given moment. It allows some of the routine and repetition of married life to be quietly satisfying as an accomplishment even when it is not "exciting." It also makes bearable the times when emotions are not high in situations of *for worse* or *for poorer* or *in sickness*. With this philosophy, marriage does not become a "for better, for richer, in health, or till divorce do us part" arrangement.

Then and only then does *till death do us part* keep its meaning and its promise. Without both, marriage becomes a temporary situation - guided by the false path of "situation ethics."

And a marriage without the total giving of Love, which is evidenced in the procreation of children, is nothing but a togetherness of double egoism.

SITUATION ETHICS

When considering all the moral questions such as lust, fornication, adultery, artificial birth control, abortion, and divorce, it should be remembered that it is easy for the mind to rationalize itself out of the necessity to follow any objective rules of morality. One of the most popular modern methods is to use what is called "situation ethics," a term previously referred to. It is the idea that nothing is always sinful for all people at all times under all circumstances. What makes it very convenient is that the pragmatic mind only has to try to convince its conscience that a certain action is not immoral *all the time*. It only has to cloud the conscience that it is not an immoral action *for oneself*, and *at that time*. Even if this moral heresy is not familiar under the name of "situation ethics," it is certainly familiar in practice.

Let us see how it is used in the moral questions previously listed. "I do not believe that all unmarried couples should engage in sex, but we are in love." "I believe that a man should be faithful to his wife, but I was on a business trip and had gone two whole days without sex." "I know that artificial birth control is wrong for most couples, but we really cannot afford to have another child." "I realize that killing an unborn baby is murder, but it is different if the baby has Down's Syndrome." "I do not ordinarily treat my wife with lust when she has the flu, but I really need sex after watching this x-rated video." "I knew that divorce is a renunciation of my wedding vows and will be a crushing blow to my children, but I cannot be expected to live with (a man who does not tell me he loves me) or (a woman who has lost her figure).

The essence of all situation ethics is the first word in all of the above examples - the word "I" - the center letter in the word PRIDE. They are not based on an authority other than their own feelings and their own mind. If there is anything to be avoided, it is an obedience to a higher authority. This is why most Christians today are "cafeteria Christians," in that they pick and choose out of Christ's teachings whatever is easy and convenient for them to follow - and ignore the rest. Of course, this means that they are not really Christians at all. And when the "Christians" in a "Christian marriage" actually are not Christ-like in their philosophy of marriage and their treatment of each other, the marriage is built on a contradiction. It cannot support the weight of any relationship - and the marriage collapses.

A few examples in other areas will also make situation ethics easily recognizable. "I do not think cheating is always right, but I had to cheat on this test to pass the course." "I do not make a habit of missing church on Sunday, but I really wanted to make this out-of-town professional football game." "I think a teenager should usually obey his parents, but it is unreasonable for my parents to forbid me to use alcohol and experiment with drugs at a party." "I do not usually lie about anyone, but she lied about me first." "I do not approve of stealing, but it is not fair for everyone else to steal from the cash box at work except me."

Do any of these sound familiar? Situation ethics is so popular because it can be used by anyone at any time to rationalize away any sinful action. Every individual sin becomes the "exception" to the rule.

Situation ethics has far-reaching repercussions in other areas besides personal lives. It permeates the legal system, which now places "individual rights" above the common good. Everyone should be well aware of how the "rights" of a guilty criminal are now defended more than the innocent people he preys upon. It is not only a case of the individual receiving more consideration than the good of society, however, but even a guilty individual is more protected than an innocent individual.

It is now "legal" to kill an innocent pre-born baby for such "reasons" as: being the wrong sex, being unwanted, the possibility of retardation, being one too many in multiple births, and being the cause of "mental stress." If a doctor kills a baby the day before birth, he is "terminating a pregnancy" and is innocent of any crime. If he kills the same baby the day after birth, it is murder and he is guilty of a horrible crime. The birth of every baby is a miracle, but not the kind where some kind of non-entity suddenly becomes a baby when exiting a birth canal. This is the most obvious example in history of a lack of scientific evidence being utilized in making a legal decision - not to mention reason and common sense.

It also has to be the biggest hypocrisy of all time for a judge to be sworn in by taking an oath to God, and then ignoring God's Laws in his decisions as a judge. The "I am personally opposed to abortion, but..." argument is simply a case of applied situation ethics. (It works - but only until Judgement Day.)

Another area of situation ethics not usually regarded as such is the one involving the women's liberation movement. When it is often used to "justify" a woman giving up her vocation as a mother in order to work at an outside paying job, the rationalization used is usually one of these three: 1) "We need the money" (for more materialistic possessions), 2) "A woman must prove her equality by competing with men in the work force," 3) "I do not find being a housewife and mother fulfilling." (These are examples of false reasons. This is not to suggest that there never are good reasons.)

Regarding 1), there are many married women who work at an outside job and then pay someone else to take care of her children, with the plus side of the account ledger coming to as little as \$100 to \$200 a month. This sometimes allows her to buy her own car, which she would not need if she did not have an outside job. Regardless of how much money she makes, however, it can never be enough to cover what it costs her children not to be nurtured by their own mother.

For 2), a woman in the work force doing the same job as a man, and even earning the same amount of money, does not bring any amount of "equality" any more than being a male executive makes you equal to all other male executives or being a male ditch digger makes you equal to all other male ditch diggers. The "equality" involved is more similar to two women buying the same style dress for the same price.

As for 3), it is not that being a full-time mother is not "fulfilling", as much as it was not "rewarding" enough. That is a matter of an attitude in which they think the only valid and worthwhile reward for work is money.

Another myth that women's libbers use in an attempt to justify efforts at gaining "equality" is to claim that if men can have "everything" meaning fatherhood and a career, then why cannot women have motherhood and a career? The most blatant illogic here, which they seem to forget or want to ignore, is that motherhood *is* a career. In fact, it not only is *a* career, it is the *best* career that ever existed. Joseph Cardinal Mindszenty said that "The most important person on earth is a mother. She cannot claim the honor of having built Notre Dame Cathedral. She need not. She has built something more magnificent than any cathedral - a dwelling for an immortal Soul, the tiny perfection of her baby's body... The angels have not been blessed with such a grace. They cannot share in God's creative miracle to bring new saints to Heaven. Only a human mother can. Mothers are closer to God the Creator than any other creature; God joins forces with mothers in performing this act of creation... What on God's good earth is more glorious than this - to be a mother?"

Of course, he was not suggesting that the physical act of having a child, and then abandoning it to someone else's care - earns a woman the exalted respect of

motherhood. It is the daily life of love, affection, teaching and understanding that are given and the sacrifices that are made, in taking this totally helpless baby from birth and nurturing his development into the beginning stages of adulthood. What other job or career on earth could even come close to the natural fulfillment in being a good mother?

The key word in that last sentence is "good." Any female past puberty can simply be a physical mother. Any female with a baby can be a lousy mother. Neither one of those can find much more fulfillment in being a mother any more than a female who kills her baby with an abortion. In all three cases, a baby is just a burden.

When a baby is considered a blessing, however, and is truly Loved, then the sacrifices that are done by the mother in the practice of that Love becomes a good part of the fulfillment itself. One of those sacrifices (maybe the biggest to some) is the trade-off of a career in the business world for the career of motherhood. It is another case of a trade-off. It is a fallacy to say that men do not make a trade-off as they have both fatherhood and a career. That, first of all, makes a false assumption that the responsibilities of fatherhood and motherhood are the same. While their responsibilities are equal, they are certainly not - and cannot be - the same. It is a similar situation regarding the responsibilities of being a husband and the responsibility in being a wife. If both the father and mother stayed home and took care of the children, from where would the family's income be derived?

Did God ever give some kind of guide about this? The simple fact that it is the woman who has the baby should make the point rather obvious in itself. God did not create males and females with the same reproductive system in order for them to have an option as to whom has the babies. (Which also makes the statement ridiculous that if men had to have the second baby, all families would have only one child. That's like saying that if all women were over 8 feet tall, they would take over professional basketball. Actually, the second case is more possible - not likely to happen, but still more possible.)

Besides the biological reason, there are the statements of God to Adam and Eve after the sin in the Garden of Eden. He said to Eve,

"...in pain shall you bring forth children."

and to Adam,

"Cursed be the ground because of you, in toil shall you eat of it all the days of your life...."

(Genesis 3:16-17)

That certainly sounds like a definite delineation of "roles." (Some women who hate being women - or at least hate God's Plan for women - must go through the Holy Bible with a felt pen blotting out all the passages that do not fit their newly-created concept of modern womanhood. That these women would still call themselves "Christians" only shows the far reaches of rationalism that is possible in the human mind.)

Let us return to the point of men having fatherhood and a career. First of all, fatherhood is not a full-time job, whereas motherhood is. (Even when a man stays home with the children, he is called "Mr. Mom.") If it was God's Plan for it to be interchangeable as to whether husbands or wives had the major responsibility for children, then He would have at least given men breasts so they could also nurse babies. (While bottles of milk may have now made that role optional, it is certainly not the *natural* or *original* way, and that is what is concerned here. Additional proof of God's Plan for mothers is that their milk has a direct, positive effect on the health of the baby, and that nursing even has good benefits for the mother.)

Women are also more mentally and emotionally able to take care of children on a full-time basis. That still does not make the career of motherhood "easy," but neither is any man's outside career "easy." Both careers also involve repetitive duties.

Full-time motherhood, though, has several advantages that 99% of men's careers do not have. A full-time mother can usually set her own schedule - do what she wants when she wants to do it. A full-time mother does not have one, two, or three bosses not only telling her what to do, but also constantly looking over her shoulder. A full-time mother does not have to deal with the public all day long as many men are required to do. While these men "have an adult to talk to," it is often or usually not the kind of talk they are interested in. A full-time mother is certainly busy, but can sit and relax without watching a clock or worrying about who is going to catch her. A full-time mother does not even have to worry about "sexual harassment" on the job.

The women's liberation movement, however, comes along and tells women that all of the above plus the most important aspect - the joy and satisfaction of taking care of their own children - is not equal to any other job in which you receive a paycheck. There are many women today who have "everything" - wife, children and career - but are they happier as a result?

Is not a woman wanting "everything" the start of all the trouble in the first place? Let us keep in mind that Eve was allowed to eat from every tree in the Garden of Eden except one. She lived in a state of perfect natural happiness, but she was not allowed only one thing. The devil tempted her with wanting "everything," and we all know not only what it cost her, but what it has cost every human being born since then.

Is the temptation for a woman to want "everything" - and by doing so giving up her God-given responsibilities as a mother - the biggest success the devil has had since the Garden of Eden? In early recorded history, women were considered chattel, a possession of men. They were neither given any dignity nor treated with respect. This changed with Christianity.

Jesus Christ could have simply come down from Heaven and appeared as a fully grown man in order to tell us how to live and worship God. He did not. He came into this world as a helpless baby, through the humility and acceptance of God's Will of a woman - the Blessed Virgin Mary. As Christ grew into adulthood, He was nurtured by His mother at home. He was not put in a day-care center so Mary could work with Joseph in his carpenter's shop. She changed diapers and wiped runny noses, just like any other mother. She received no honors or awards for her job. She received no raises in salary or promotions in her career. She certainly suffered the sorrows of motherhood in seeing her Son be crucified. The only reward she receives for living her vocation as a simple wife and mother is an eternity of perfect happiness in Heaven. That *should* be vocation enough and reward enough for any woman.

It should also be noted that Jesus Christ, even as the second person of the Holy Trinity of God, was *subject* to His mother and foster father (Luke 2:51). Evidently, He did not believe that being obedient to someone else is somehow "degrading." It should also be noted that while St. Joseph was the third most important figure in the Holy Family, he was still the head of it. It was to St. Joseph that an angel appeared, and told him to take Christ and His mother and flee to Egypt.

As a result of Christianity, women and motherhood were exalted. The life of the Blessed Virgin Mary was proclaimed in thousands of pictures painted of her and the Child Jesus, and displayed in thousands of churches around the world. As devotion to Mary increased, she inspired countless millions of women to emulate her example in motherhood, and an equal number of men in respecting women and their special vocation.

It was not too long ago that women were still put on a "pedestal" by men. While there have always been women who have been poor examples of womanly virtues, they received no respect from men and were definitely not the kind that good men wanted to marry. "Good women" were those who imitated the purity and chastity of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Men, whether they realized it or not, were following the example of St. Joseph in treating women with such respect and protection. Even in a minor matter such as cursing, men would avoid it in front of a "lady," and if one slipped, he would certainly be corrected by any "gentleman" present. Even a simple custom such as males opening doors for females goes back to the special respect and treatment that all females were given.

Now, let us examine the fruits of the women's "liberation" movement. The winds of change started blowing when a few women decided they would rather be treated "equal" than be treated *special*. They wanted to be like a man in everything from dressing like them, to talking like them, to acting like them. Faster than probably any other false ideology in history, it swept across the United States, fed by jealousy in its infancy, resentment in its adolescence, and Pride in its maturity.

While it must be granted that women today are being treated "equal," is that a step upward - or two steps downward? Are women really better off because they can now curse and tell dirty jokes in mixed company? Are women really better off because they have the scientific means to prevent conception and can now commit as many sins of fornication as men without any "consequences"? Are women really better off because the above fact has made them become treated more like sex objects than ever before?

Becoming "equal" has brought them more "legal rights," but has it brought them more personal happiness? Has it made them more satisfied or less satisfied with their lives? Has a woman's career outside of the home made her a better wife and better mother? Or has it been one of the main causes of unhappy marriages and broken homes?

Yes, the sexes are indeed equal, but that is only in their nature, their being, and their dignity as persons. As stated, the different "roles" of a husband and wife are certainly equal in value, but they are not the same in responsibilities. The nature of males and females are both diverse and complimentary. To expect identical roles would be to deny the physical, mental, psychological and emotional differences that God created, and which still exist in the differences in these natures. It is this glorification of "equality," along with the glorification of the "individual," that has undermined the foundation of family life in this country. The first result of that is unhappy marriages, the second result is divorce, and the third result is children growing up without the love and security they deserve in a home with two loving parents. This doomed-to-failure search for "equality" along with the greater percentage of working mothers is no doubt the cause of the divorce rate going up 40% just in the years between 1970 and 1990.

Has mothers giving up being the "heart of the home" for a salaried job been worthwhile to their family's happiness? It is necessary for both men and women to ignore the modern attempts to make them dissatisfied with being husbands and wives - and their individual and unique roles as such - in order to be happy within the context of a marriage guided by God's Plan.

TIME OF ADJUSTMENT

Few couples stay in the Black Pit for the rest of their lives. They either make-up or break-up. While making-up might seem the more difficult to do at the time, it is really much easier than getting a divorce. More often than not, divorce actually increases the tension instead of releasing it - both in their relationship and their life outside of the relationship. Divorce does not bring happiness; it brings even more unhappiness. It is another example of a short-term "solution" being the worst one in the long run.

Many people have the mistaken idea that the choice is between living unhappily in marriage or living unhappily in divorce. The actual choice is either between being miserably married/miserably divorced, or doing whatever is necessary both individually and together to be "happily married."

Steinmetz suggests that a couple should "lock themselves in a room, throw away the key, and resolve to get everything out into the open. The inner emotions have to surface so they can be faced and handled."

While that would be true, it is not only the hardest way for that to be accomplished, it also may not accomplish anything else. Getting all the deep-seated frustrations, resentments, unmet needs, and dislikes out into the open is not a solution in itself. Besides, there is too much negative emotion between them, and it is highly improbable that any reason and common sense can enter into any discussions that are only between them. They may also say things that cannot be "taken back" and which can be hard to recover from. They need a counselor, a third party, a mediator.

In fact, if couples talked with a marriage counselor in the Reality/Disappointment Period, it might help them avoid the Non-Effort and Black Pit Periods altogether. Unfortunately, just as with God (or instead of God), people have a tendency to seek help only at the time of crisis, forgetting that doing so ahead of time could well prevent the crisis.

Now it is not enough to just have a counselor. It is not enough to just have a good counselor. It is not enough to just have a moral counselor. A couple in a troubled marriage needs a good, moral, religious counselor. That kind of a counselor uses a two-fold approach: religious and practical. The religious will be covered first as it is the most important, and if practical approaches do not have religious beliefs as their basis, their solutions will more than likely be only temporary.

This ties all the way back to the qualities in a person that makes one a good individual before they make one a good marriage partner. Suppose someone is a "considerate" person before marriage. If that is a quality based on a philosophy of trying to be as Christ-like as possible (making it a supernatural virtue), then being "considerate" will remain to be a quality after marriage - even a troubled marriage. If, however, being considerate is only a natural quality (only shown because of what will be gained in return) then it may no longer be shown in a troubled relationship. The same is true for other qualities of Love: patience, kindness, understanding, respect, unselfishness, and sacrifice. Without a religious, supernatural basis for the continuing of these positive qualities, other "natural" qualities which are negative may win the upper hand. These would include stubbornness, jealousy, self-centeredness, selfishness, possessiveness, meanness, and vindictiveness.

The first thing a good, moral counselor will do is to set the marriage back on a course that aligns it with God's Plan for marriage - or to set it on that course for the first time. Any other counselor is only a "how to stop fighting" counselor or a "how

to have better sex" counselor.

Any other approach is an attempt to have success without having the Creator of marriage as a basis and guide. It is like trying to put together a puzzle using the wrong picture as a guide. (Any other approach might even be interpreted by God as trying to defeat His purpose.) The purpose of this book - if not very obvious by this time - is to be a good, moral religious counselor. That is why it does not suggest simply "getting in touch with your feelings" or "have better communication." While it can certainly help, it may not get to the real root of their problems.

In "Love For A Lifetime," Dr. James Dobson reprints a letter from a woman who said that after fifteen years of marriage, her husband left her - despite the fact they had a good physical, emotional, and intellectual relationship. She admitted that there was no spiritual bond between them. That spiritual bond was always important, but in today's world it is almost absolutely necessary.

Before a couple attempts to set up communications lines again between themselves, they should first set up better communication lines with God. This can be summed up in one word - prayer, which is simply the lifting of the mind and heart to God. It can be vocal or silent; formal or informal. What it accomplishes is more grace (that supernatural help from God to lead a better life and get to Heaven) for the individual when done separately and more grace for the couple when done together. It brings peace of Soul as well as peace of mind. Of course, prayer (asking God's help for grace for oneself or others) is only an example of hypocrisy if it is done while breaking God's Commandments with no true intention of changing. If a true change is wanted, then it will simply be a matter of prayer, along with willpower, persisted in over a period of time. (Again, God is not a dispensing machine where you put in so much and instantly receive your "due.")

Prayer is a way of "seeding" the clouds in order to bring down a rain of graces. This cannot be accomplished, however, if sins in marriage (such as artificial birth control or adultery) have cleared the skies of all clouds.

Father Patrick Peyton coined the saying, "The family that prays together, stays together," Being a Catholic priest, he recommends that the family pray the rosary together, and even families of other religions have found that the fifteen minutes of praying the rosary has brought peace, harmony, and *special unity* among its members. One survey reported that less than 2% of families which prayed the rosary daily ever split up.

Out of all the activities in which a couple or a family can participate, prayer will always be the most important. What couples do not realize is that the lack of spiritual togetherness leads to a lack of mental togetherness which leads to a lack of physical togetherness. Dr. Calvin Reid in "How to Ruin a Happy Marriage" gave three ways: (1) Expect too much; (2) Give too little; and (3) Leave God out. The rank of importance, however, is in reverse order.

Marriages fail because people fail, and people fail without God. A couple's spiritual union should be started in the engagement period, if not before. If a couple is not comfortable praying together before they are married, then they will probably not be comfortable praying together after marriage. If praying together is not a priority before marriage, then it will probably not become one after marriage. In fact, if it is not a good habit practiced before marriage, then it will probably not become one afterward; unless, of course, it is an important part of the choice in the Black Pit Period of moving into the Time of Adjustment instead of getting a divorce.

If God (the Creator of marriage) and prayer (our willing subjugation to that Creator) is not the center of a marriage, then that marriage is only a legal joining for

mutual personal interests. It is no surprise why these marriages do not succeed or are not happy, as mutual personal interests rarely remain the same on their own. As explained earlier, no true Love for God means no true Love for any human beings. The result of that is always inevitable, and that inevitable is always negative.

Once God is given His rightful place as the third-party involved in the marriage (see Appendix H), the practical approaches to the Time of Adjustment can work - using the kind of counselor previously recommended. Any other kind is a waste of time, and if paid for, a waste of money. (One additional point about a counselor: It may be that in many cases a priest or other unmarried counselor would even be better than a married one, as it may avoid subconscious prejudices based on negative personal experiences.)

It is true, however, that it is not necessary to be or have been married in order to be a good marriage counselor. A married person may be an expert on one marriage (their own) but a professional unmarried counselor may be knowledgeable about thousands of marriages and have personal experience with hundreds. This is not necessarily a recommendation, only a consideration.

The initial step for a couple is to admit to each other that if they really did not want to Love each other and be Loved in return, they would never have gotten married in the first place. Each spouse should apologize to the other for temporarily forgetting this.

If this is still the desire of both persons, then being happily married will not be a case of *if*, but only *when*. The more qualities that each person has and the more they are shown to each other anew, the sooner the *when* will take place.

Whatever the problems are, and no matter how big they seem, they all started very small. Before delving into the actual problems themselves, it is necessary for the couple to understand and express what their original expectations of marriage were and how they were disappointed. Often this is a result of finding out that what was important during dating was unimportant in marriage, and what seemed unimportant during dating became very important during marriage.

The next step is to decide and express what you each want out of marriage, what you each need out of marriage, and what you each expect out of marriage. While this should have been done during the Engagement Period, it should again be done here. The realities of marriage may have eliminated some, corrected others, and changed the priorities of the rest.

The first step here is to decide how important your marriage is in your life. In a recent survey of 600 couples by the Massachusetts Mutual Insurance Company, more people said that ambition was more important to them than love of family. Two-thirds said they would take another job which paid more even if it cost them more time with their family. It is no surprise that they also thought that being happy in marriage was more important than staying married for life. The last question involved that same old false choice, but it is doubtful that the people questioned realized that. The answer still shows, however, that temporary emotions are still considered more important than permanent commitments. The survey also showed why so many marriages fail - they do not have a high enough priority for success. (It would be interesting to find out how few of those marriages with the wrong priorities still exist in another five years.)

Once a couple agrees on the importance of their marriage, then they need to agree on what they want their marriage to be: what does the wife need to be and to do to make her husband reasonably happy, and what does the husband need to be and to do to make his wife reasonably happy. "Reasonably happy" is an important term

here, as the concept of it was probably missing in the Black Pit Period when the focus was on displeasing behavior much more than any pleasing behavior. The focus was also on the dislike that was being dug up, rather than the Love that was being buried in the process. Notice also that it is stated in the form of giving to each other. It should be more "What can I do for you" rather than "This is what I want you to do for me." It may be the same information that comes out, but it is a big difference in how the information was attained, and how it would be received.

While the focus should be on the improvements in the future, it is still valid to discuss the grievances of the past in determining the new course ahead. In a study of 792 couples, Lewis Terman asked for and received a list of marital grievances according to perceived seriousness. The top 28 each for husbands and wives are listed below for general informational purposes.

	<u>Order for Husbands</u>	<u>Order for Wives</u>
affection	nags me	selfish and inconsiderate
	unsuccessful in business	not affectionate
	selfish and inconsiderate	untruthful
	complains too much	complains too much
	interferes with hobbies	does not show his
	slovenly in appearance	does not talk things over
	is quick tempered	harsh with children
	interferes with my discipline	touchy
	conceited	has no interest in children
	is insincere	not interested in home
	feelings too easily hurt	not affectionate
	criticizes me	rude
	narrow-minded	lacks ambition
	neglects the children	nervous or impatient
	a poor housekeeper	criticizes me
	argumentative	poor management of
		income
	has annoying habits	narrow-minded
	untruthful	not faithful to me
	interferes in my business	lazy
	spoils the children	bored with my small talk
	poor management of income	in-laws
	in-laws	easily influenced by others
	insufficient income	tight with money
	nervous or emotional	argumentative
	easily influenced by others	insufficient income
	jealous	has no backbone
	lazy	dislikes to go out with me
	gossips indiscreetly	attentive to other women

This is not to be considered a "hit list" for attacking purposes - although it may be used to bring to the surface some hidden complaints. This is helpful if the method is done in a positive manner and results in a positive change. It is a proven fact that one cannot change wrongful behavior unless: 1) it is realized; 2) it is admitted, and 3) there are conscious attempts to eliminate it. This does not mean that miracles of

change will take place in either spouse. With continual perseverance on the part of the offender and with continual patience on the part of the offended, however, there can be a continuing improvement in the area. Perfection, however, should never be expected or demanded -either of oneself or the other person. Both parties will probably insist they are the one that "tried" during the Black Pit Period, while in actuality, probably neither one did.

One of the things that will come out in this time is not only do couples have unequal expectations in marriage, but these expectations fall in different areas. Dr. Jeffrey Young found in a study: "Husbands tend to place more emphasis on what psychologists call 'instrumental' facets of married life - things like housekeeping, meals, finance, recreation, or personal appearance. Wives, on the other hand, tend to emphasize 'affectional behavior,' gestures that convey acceptance, approval or affection."

"This is how signals get crossed," says Dr. Young. "A husband might think, 'She doesn't love me, because she's not keeping the house clean the way I like it to be.' Meanwhile, the wife is thinking, 'He didn't kiss me today, he doesn't love me.' And both will feel unappreciated, misunderstood - lonely."

This comes back to communication again. While honest communication of feelings, needs, and wants are necessary here, it is not always easy to use the usual method to accomplish that - especially when one feels hurt. An easy solution to this quandary is to use written communication. This could be a note left on a table or a pillow, or even a letter sent through the mail to reach your spouse at work or at home. It is often easier to write a suggestion or a complaint instead of saying it aloud. (This is why many businesses use complaint boxes.) In the case of a letter, it is being read by one spouse with the other spouse absent. In both instances, there is less chance of emotions being involved in saying something so negatively that the other's emotional reaction prevents them from objectively considering what is being said.

It is easy to think, "We are married and should be able to tell each other anything at anytime." The key word there is *should*. However, since imperfect human beings are involved, the "should" could be exchanged for "sometimes find it difficult to." It is a recognizable fact that it is often more difficult to say something necessary to the people you care about the most. (It may be easier to tell a stranger he has bad breath than your best friend). And it also often comes out better to strangers than the ones you love the most. (Witness the mother who talks sweetly to the children next door and then turns and yells at her own children.) The principle concept here is that we must be realistic - not idealistic - when dealing with other human beings. Loving a spouse does not exclude them from being given the same consideration as others. In actuality, they should get much more consideration.

A minor point, but still valid, is that couples should never try to talk about disagreements or problems *before* a meal. Always wait until *after* a meal when the body is satisfied and you are not also dealing with the effects of low blood sugar on the brain. Keep mealtimes pleasant and positive.

During this time of clearing the air during the Time of Adjustment, it is important to remember that this is a time of apology, but not a time for confessions. If you have done something wrong that needs confessing, then take it to God through a priest (if you are Catholic) or take it directly to God (if you are not). While you may well need to get something "off your chest," do not dump it "on the mind" of your spouse. There is a great temptation to do this at times of emotional honesty, and there could be a positive emotional appreciation of it. Unfortunately, though, since the mind never stays at this high emotional level, the mind will also lose its emotional

appreciation of the confession. Even though the intellectual part of the mind will always appreciate it, it may come to haunt the emotional mind of the hearer for the rest of their life.

This, in turn, will end up affecting the emotional relationship between them and can cause much unhappiness which should be prevented. It is the same principles involved in the suggestion not to "confess" past sins and indiscretions before marriage. The suggestions made for entering the Time of Adjustment are necessary for any couple who are in the Black Pit. Other couples, however, can prevent the Black Pit if they make God the third party in their marriage from the beginning.

Positive communication skills can make the Reality/Disappointment Period and the Time of Adjustment Period shorter, as a good attitude and openness could prevent the tensions from ever building up. That way, a couple could avoid the Non-Effort and Black Pit Periods altogether, and arrive in the Love-Sharing Period much easier and faster.

LOVE-SHARING

The Love-Sharing Period (the sixth and final transitional stage in relationships) is distinguished by two features: acceptance and growth. The first one involves the acceptance of the reality of what the other person is and the reality of what marriage is. The mind no longer wastes time daydreaming that either their spouse will suddenly turn out to be Cinderella or Prince Charming or that another Cinderella or Prince Charming will come along and the next relationship will be perfect. It is accepting the reality of marriage without concentrating on any disappointment in it.

Acceptance is understanding that the exciting *attraction* phase has been replaced by a quieter *attachment* phase. The couple are now comfortable with each other and secure in that comfort. There is no longer a need for a constant effort to change your spouse into your idea of perfection. You Love your spouse for what they are, and while some changes and improvements will still be desired, you do not base your happiness or your marriage on them taking place. It becomes a matter of it being easier to see the total good in a person and focusing on that rather than the imperfections. Any additional changes or improvements after those done in the Time of Adjustment, only add additional icing on the cake. The Love-Sharing Period is the sixth and final transitional stage of relationships, because this is the one that should last "until death do us part."

Love brings out the best in a person. It should make a person want to change and improve in ways to become a better person - if for no other reason than to make happier the one Loved. A husband may not think it necessary to pick up his clothes, but if he knows that it is important to his wife, then he will do it for Love of her. A wife may not think it is necessary to keep the bathroom counter clean, but if that is important to her husband, then she will do it for Love of him.

The important thing about Love (which is often rare) is the principle that a person who Loves is willing to do what makes the other person happier without a guaranteed return. When In Like, you do what pleases the other person because you want something in return, whether it is the continuing of emotional attachment, affection, or a particular favor. Love, however, does not necessitate an automatic return on its investment. The highest form of Love is not for "deals" to always have to be made: "I will pick up my clothes if you keep the bathroom counter clean" - or vice versa. While there is nothing wrong with using a "deal" as an incentive or a compromise, Love would be absent if there was always a one-to-one reciprocal action on the deal: "You left your clothes out yesterday, so I am not cleaning off the bathroom counter today." That would be another case of a "50-50 marriage," which eliminates Love. Love is shown when one person continues to do what is best and right regardless of what the other person does. This also places self-respect ahead of vindictiveness.

A so-called "50-50 marriage" is a psychological attempt to take the "risk" out of marriage - the risk that *I* may put into it more than *you* do. It is an attempt to guarantee that "love" will be equal between the partners. Love, however, is never equal unless it always stayed at 99% for both partners. It might be that way on the honeymoon, but then again, that is only a temporary Idealism Period.

Marriage will always be a risk, because Loving someone always involves a risk. Part of that risk is the fact that Love will not always be instantly returned by Love at every given moment. This is why Love is not only a willingness to be made happy,

but also a willingness to accept small hurts. This is why so many people are afraid to Love - their fear of being hurt takes precedence over their need for being happy. They do not give because of being afraid that it will not be returned.

It has been said that the capacity to love implies the ability to idealize another person, and that the ability to regenerate the feeling of idealization again and again over time is a proof of love. This is certainly true of the emotional side of love, as "falling in love" again and again will regenerate those feelings. This is why repeated "honeymoons" are important in reviving emotions in marriage to avoid them from feeling "stale." It is the refueling of romance and taking another flight above the clouds. While you always have to come back down to earth, it is that time away which recharges us mentally in order to better be able to handle our everyday life.

It would also be good for couples to take a yearly weekend "religious retreat," where they can also recharge their "spiritual batteries." This may be accomplished better for an individual retreat for each rather than one for couples. It will always be accomplished better on a silent retreat rather than a social one. (To whom are you there to talk to, anyway?) Annual retreats should also be started in the beginning of marriages, which would prevent problems later.

The capacity to continue Love involves more of a *growth* in Love rather than a *falling*. The latter pertains more to attraction. The former is not only a continuation of Christ-like qualities involving the other person even when feelings are not high, but an increase in them over this period of a lifetime together. Feelings will ebb and flow with the ups and downs of married life. If Love is constant, however, not only does the marriage stay strong and secure in the down times, but it makes those times much shorter. There will still be disagreements, but each spouse knows that a solution will be reached, and it can be accomplished without a power struggle to maintain some misplaced sense of ego or Pride. Problems will not bring about some kind of doubt, fear, or panic in the mind as to what will happen in the future because of them. They are simply seen as one more hurdle in the run of their marriage. Love also makes it possible to overlook minor imperfections and idiosyncrasies and not make them into another hurdle.

As Love grows in marriage, each spouse returns to the concept of thinking about how to please the other person. A *to give* attitude receives more attention than a *to get* one. This in itself can re-ignite emotional feelings more than anything else. It is an example of the truism that "It is better to give than to receive." The classic example in literature of this quality is O'Henry's short story, "The Gift of the Magi." His story is about a poor young married couple at Christmas time. Neither has any money to buy the other a gift. The wife cuts off her hair, and sells it to buy her husband a chain for his watch, while at the same time, he sells his watch to buy her a comb for her hair. Each one thought of doing something completely unselfish in order to make the other one happy. That was an application of true Love in action.

It is ironic that the same thing that makes Love possible with another person also sometimes makes it difficult. That is because we really do Love ourselves first and "Loving our neighbor (even a spouse) as ourselves" sometimes causes a conflict between those two Loves. The only thing to prevent this conflict is to have a third Love - a greater Love - and this is a love for God and His Will and His Plan.

Since our Love for a perfect God is imperfect, how much more imperfect is our Love for another imperfect human being like ourselves. Therefore, our Love for another human being can only be a smaller amount than it is for God. And if our Love for God is small, then the greatest our Love can be for another person is infinitesimal. A marriage cannot grow on infinitesimal Love. In actuality then, true Love cannot

grow in a marriage without a growth in the Love of God.

Since all Love comes from God and must return to God, then that would indicate that true atheists can not Love. They have no starting point and no ending purpose - unless it is simply to satisfy their own feelings, emotions, needs, desires, and ego. It should be obvious by now that all of those together still do not equal Love. They can feel and have all the other categories from Physical Attraction to Like, but they cannot Love because the most basic and truest element is missing. Any "love" they have and show is based on temporary personal feelings and emotions and not on a permanent higher standard.

Again, the fullness of human Love includes the reason of Love, the emotion of Like, and the allurements of Physical Attraction. While an atheist may have great degrees of the last two, that still does not make it Love, anymore than simply wearing a uniform and sitting on the bench of a professional athletic team makes one a member of that team. In both cases, other people may be fooled by the surface appearance, but the essence of the truth of the matter has not been changed.

An example is a person who is compassionate toward a certain set of people, whether the poor, the aged, the handicapped, or some other group. If this is done for worldly credit or glory, or even for personal Pride (whether consciously or subconsciously), then it is not true charity - it is not true Love. However, if charitable work is done out of a reflection of the Love of God that is done first and foremost because it pleases God to use our talents and abilities to help those less fortunate, then and only then is the work the product of Love and an example of true charity. This is not to imply that one cannot feel satisfaction, or even joy, in doing this work. It is just that satisfaction or joy must be a byproduct and not the main purpose for doing it. The proof of whether or not it is done for Love of God first is if satisfaction and joy is missing and the work continues. It is also proof if satisfaction or joy is there in the beginning, and the work continues after they are gone.

One example of true charity is the life of St. Peter Claver, who spent 40 years ministering to the spiritual, mental, and medical needs of slaves aboard slave ships. At no time during those 40 years did he get over the physical sickness and revulsion endured as a product of the filth and stench deep in the holds of those ships. While natural compassion for the suffering of others could have taken him down into his first ship, only doing it primarily for the Love of God could have enabled him to continue doing it for 40 years.

The natural compassion in us all is a result of our immortal Soul and our conscience. This is why an atheist's "love" (or anyone else's) is never totally counterfeit. Our human nature not only allows us to Love - it commands it. But that command is not always directed according to the Laws of God. (This is why we see examples in counterfeit love in those who favor killing pre-born babies, but then turn around and lobby for the protection of unborn eagles or alligators or some other "endangered species." Are human lives worth less simply because there are more of them?)

The command (or necessity) to Love your spouse is always there in marriage - even in the worst times. It is just that it gets tangled up in the weakness of our human nature toward self-centeredness and the selfish thoughts and actions that feed it. This is why it may very well be true to say, "No one can truly experience the real essence of Love until after marriage." It would be a case of Love being proven only after it has been practiced over a period of years in good times and bad, with or without the presence of high feelings.

In former times when marriages were arranged, it even sometimes happened that

couples did not meet until the day of their marriage. (Talk about "pot luck.") Still, by living the principles of marriage, Love would develop and grow between them. Nowadays, Love may be there at the time of the wedding, but it still needs to grow for a marriage to be successful. While most marriages in former times may also have gone through these six stages, it probably was not to the same degree, as well as going through them faster. The philosophy of marriage was better then, and expectations lower.

The more Love *present* in the beginning, the more Love *practiced* in the beginning, and the more Love *grows* from the beginning, the less of a chance for a marriage to have to suffer through a Non-Effort Period and a Black Pit Period. And it would totally eliminate even the possibility of a divorce period.

PRINCIPLES OF A HAPPY MARRIAGE

The first thing to note is that this is not a chapter on how to have a "perfect marriage," because that is a contradiction in terms. No one can even have a "happy marriage" if they equate that term with "perfect." There are also degrees of happiness, from *kind of happy*, to *mildly happy*, to *pretty happy*, to *very happy*. (Gloriously happy may exist, but probably only on the honeymoon.) Which level a couple is at will depend on their philosophy and relationship, and even then, the level will change according to what is going on in their lives and in their world at that moment.

Marriage was the fifth transitional state in relationships, but the beginning of a permanent one. It is a permanent end to the single life (searching for a suitable mate while going in and out of Like and maybe Love) and the beginning of a permanent relationship in marriage. At the same time, the marriage relationship should not be static. It should always be in a state of transition to a higher stage of Love. If there is no such thing as a plateau in your spiritual life with God (it is either going up or going down), then there is also no such thing as a plateau in your relationship with a spouse.

For many (or most) marriages, there will be times when the marriage alternates between being *very easy*, to *easy*, to *some effort*, to *much effort*, to *some difficulty*, to *much difficulty*, and to *seemingly impossible to bear*. Marriages in which couples have a commitment for life and work at that commitment have more of a variance in the top half of those categories. Couples without that philosophy have more of a variance in the bottom half. There will always be some variance, however, even in happy marriages. The road sometimes takes a downward turn in its path up the mountain.

There are ways in which to help keep the road traveled going upward for the vast majority of the time. The following list includes what this writer believes to be 52 principles of a happy marriage and which should always be kept in mind. Some practical suggestions to help maintain them are also listed. They are not necessarily in order of importance.

1. Children are the fruit of Love and the blessings of a marriage.
2. Your spouse should be your best friend - and always treated as such.
3. The permanent security of being Loved for what you are after marriage means much more than the temporary high of romantic notions felt before marriage.
4. New Love is like new white shoes - bright, shiny, and completely clean. They do not stay that way once they are worn. After they are worn awhile, they no longer have the look of new, but are much more comfortable to wear.
5. Happiness is a frame of mind - not a solution. To be happily married, you must also want your spouse to make you happy - and help them accomplish it.
6. A person's capacity to give and a person's need to receive are exactly the same. Be aware of your spouse's needs and be willing to give and receive more than your own needs, if necessary, to make your spouse happy.
7. Love suggests a complete sharing - the ability to enjoy things together,

endure times apart, work for the same goals, and live for the same purpose in life. Dave Bentley defines it as "Dream the same dreams, hope the same hopes, and find the same answer to the great puzzle that is life."

8. Your marriage should be first place in priority over any job, hobby, or friends.
9. A marriage is working when togetherness is not considered a dreaded obstacle to "personal identity."
10. The practice of married Love includes drawing off each other's strengths and helping to nullify each other's weaknesses.
11. Love is not cheap; you pay a price to find it and you pay a price to keep it. Married Love involves mutual self-giving even at times when emotions are not positive.
12. The Golden Rule - "Do onto others as you would have them do onto you" -will always be a good one. Always be willing to show Love first.
13. Be kind to your spouse, and you will find it easier to be kind to everyone else; be kind to everyone else and you will find it easier to be kind to your spouse.
14. While Love is based on reason, it must be joined with emotion for there to be the true happiness that is possible in Marriage.
15. Keep romance in your marriage by doing the same things after marriage to please your spouse as you did before marriage to win your spouse. That includes husbands shaving every day and occasionally bringing a flower or a small gift. For wives, it could be wearing a little make-up every day and maybe giving a back rub after a hard day's work.
16. Renew your marriage vows every year on your anniversary. Always do it in front of your children, and having friends and relatives there also would be a good example. (Mentally intend to live those vows the next year even better than the last one.)
17. Never assume you've "made it" in marriage and no longer need to work at it simply because you are comfortable together and there is no fighting. At the same time, "contentment" *is* an important part of a good marriage.
18. Go on second honeymoons, third honeymoons, fourth honeymoons, etc. It awakens the romantic feelings and refreshes the marriage. Never feel guilty for taking time together without your children. You were a couple before they were born and will be a couple after they are grown. The period in the middle, while not having the same quantity of time alone, is just as valuable.
19. Never take your spouse or their efforts for granted. Appreciation should continually be shown for even the ordinary things, like the husband working hard at his job and the wife working hard in the home.
20. Express your needs to your spouse, including a need for time to be alone. Do not expect your spouse to either guess or read your mind as to needing this time.
21. Each spouse is always allowed their own opinion about anything (whether right or wrong). Avoid discussing topics that have a tendency (or always) to turn into arguments. You never will agree on everything.
22. Resolve yourself to the fact that some things will never have a

- "solution." Examples are differences in biological clocks (early riser versus late riser) and differences in what house temperature is most comfortable.
23. There are three ingredients to a *discussion*: 1) both parties listen carefully to what the other says; 2) both parties stay on the subject (do not bring up the past), and 3) both parties stay unemotional. In an *argument*, the opposite is true for all three. Discuss - do not argue. (Many counselors suggest holding hands in a serious discussion.) Discussions should temporarily end when the first voice is raised.
 24. Use notes or letters to say what is difficult to verbalize or to avoid hurt or embarrassment.
 25. There are humorous "mood meters" available for each spouse about their interest in sex for that night. Using the same premise, it might be handy to have a meter to express other thoughts. See Appendix A on Page 126.
 26. Not talking? Walk around with a sign around your neck that says, "I Love my wife more than anyone else in the world" or "I Love my husband more than anyone else in the world." If necessary, both spouses should wear them in certain discussions.
 27. An old Jamaica proverb suggests, "Before you marry, keep one eye open; after you marry, shut one."
 28. Wives should never call their husbands at work unless it is absolutely necessary. Men do not like to be interrupted by their wives wondering if they would like to go to a party three months in the future. At the same time, wives would probably appreciate an occasional call from their husbands. (This is only one example of many psychological differences between men and women.) At the same time, however, either would appreciate a small note in the mail.
 29. Share all positive feelings, but not all negative feelings. Some of those are only temporary because of hurt or anger. Communicate without ceasing, but not without selectivity.
 30. Always put your mind in gear before putting your mouth in operation. It is not necessary to say everything that comes into your mind.
 31. Being human, even happily married spouses will find other members of the opposite sex attractive. Those with Love of God (and His Laws) and Love of Spouse (and their feelings) will simply accept it as a matter of course, think little about it, and do nothing about it.
 32. Never try to make your spouse jealous.
 33. A husband needs to accept that a wife's duties as a mother often places their children's needs first. The wife should remember that her husband's needs may sometimes come second, but that does not mean that they are not important.
 34. Never criticize your spouse in front of the children or anyone else. Wait until you are alone, and then do it tactfully. This shows respect for your spouse and allows them the respect others have for them. Never try to build yourself up by tearing someone else down. Words are like arrows, "I'm sorry" removes the arrow, but the wound remains.
 35. Good breeds good and bad breeds bad. Getting rid of one personal bad trait per year and you will soon have nothing left but good.

36. Bishop Sheen said that marriages are physical during youth, mental during middle age, and spiritual during old age. He was simply relating the area that seems most important at each age. All three, however - physical, mental, and spiritual - should be very evident in all stages. The physical of holding hands during old age may well be an end product of praying together during youth.
37. Sex should not be given as a reward or withheld as a punishment. It should be true Love-sharing.
38. Always settle a problem or compromise (or at least call a moratorium) before going to bed at night. (See No. 37 above.) Start each new day fresh without carrying minor disagreements from one day to another.
39. Cultivate a sensor of humor - about yourself, your spouse, your marriage, and life in general. It may be the single most important practical quality that a person can have.
40. In marriage, couples are supposed to help each other through all the difficulties that this life has to offer. Most importantly, they have the responsibility to help each other on the road to salvation.
41. Love buds during In Like, matures during In Love, and blossoms In Marriage. Trying to have Love grow without the rain of God's graces is a losing proposition.
42. Happiness is a state of mind, but it is difficult to live in that state without feeling Loved. That goes double for children.
43. A happy marriage is like a good oil painting. It has many layers and all the work put into it does not show on the surface.
44. Being faithful to your spouse does not mean just the physical side by not having sex with another person. It also includes spiritual and mental faithfulness - the commitment to God and commitment to spouse. More often than not it is spiritual unfaithfulness which leads to mental unfaithfulness which leads to physical unfaithfulness.
45. If you want a happy marriage, spend more time with spiritual books instead of sex manuals - both before and after marriage.
46. There will always be something "missing" even in a happy marriage or a happy life. Human beings, whether they realize or recognize it or not, have a need for something higher and someone perfect, which is to say -God. St. Augustine wrote, "Our hearts shall not rest until it rests in Thee."
47. Happy marriages are not an accident or good fortune. It takes continual effort from both spouses.
48. If only one person is willing to really work at marriage, it will not be happy, but it still can be successful. In the 15th Century, Thomas a Kempis (who wrote the "Imitation of Christ") said, "There is no living in love without suffering." Marriage will always involve some suffering in one form or another. There is no denying that marriage may sometimes seem to be a heavy cross to bear. However, we are to be Christ-like, and He said, "If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his Cross, and follow me." (Matt. 16:24). In life, do not pray for a lighter cross; pray for stronger shoulders.
49. Marriage only becomes a dull routine when you stop concentrating on making your spouse happy.

50. Both spouses believing and practicing the same religion prevents many troubles and conflicts. If of different religions, they should concentrate on areas of religious agreement, and pray together and share devotions with which they both feel comfortable.
51. No other success in life can make up for a failure in marriage. At the same time, when you live in a happy home, you have succeeded in life.

52. (Write your own here).

The application of these principles will always be somewhat different, as each couple is made up of two unique individuals, and their relationship is unique. The principles themselves, however, are the same for every married couple.

FAMILY PLANNING

Of all the principles that contribute to a happy, successful marriage, the one that may be the most important is also considered the least important by most people.

That principle is the one that governs the general attitude toward the procreation of children, as well as the specific one regarding how many - and how often. This principle has two effects: the actual conception or non-conception of children, and the associated effects that occur as a result.

Even avoiding conception the first few years of a marriage by moral and natural means is not a good idea. Many couples plan to not have any children until the marriage has lasted a few years and has shown "a measure of success." More often than not, it may be a measure that the marriage will not last. There are two reasons for this. The first one is moral: the couple is ignoring God's basic purpose for marriage, the procreation of children, and are almost always practicing some form of artificial birth control. This denies them the graces from God that every married couple needs.

The second reason is practical: the couple are not expressing one of the main end products of Love, that being the sharing of it with others. The most important *others* are their own children. It has been expressed that "children are the supreme gift of marriage." They are bypassing the fact that having children not only reinforces their Love, but creates a special bond between them by doing so. If leaving God out of a marriage is "Strike One", then leaving children out of a marriage is "Strike Two." Then emotion leaving the relationship becomes "Strike Three." The third strike can be prevented (or at least changed to a foul tip), by avoiding the first two strikes taking place.

Another very common excuse to avoid having children during the first few years is "until we can afford them." Operating on this thinking, a couple may never get to that point, as there is a tendency to live on whatever materialistic level your salary or salaries allow. With this the case, a child will always be an "extra financial cost," and there may never be "extra money" available to "justify" having a baby.

Christ made it very clear about putting your trust in God the Father instead of worrying about your bank balance. This would probably be more true in the area of having children than in anything else. He said:

"Look at the birds of the air: they do not sow, or reap, or gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are not you of much more value than them?"

Matthew 6:26

If you are more important than animals, then so are your children. (This would also mean that saving unborn children is infinitely more important than saving unborn animals of any kind.)

Christ then gets even more specific:

"Therefore do not be anxious, saying 'What shall we eat?' or, 'What shall we drink?' or, 'What are we to put on?'...for your Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and his justice, and all these things shall be given you besides.

Matthew 6:31-33

It is important to note, of course, that He speaks of God the Father taking care of necessary needs - food, drink, and clothes. No family which has really put God first has had to do without these necessities of life.

In avoiding to have children, there is also the stifling of the natural maternal and paternal instincts which are not only a natural part of the individual, but also a normal product of Love. With that outlet stifled, it places more pressure on the couple to satisfy all of each other's needs. In this they cannot succeed. This puts an additional strain on their relationship where none should exist.

After a few years of it, the relationship may become empty and the couple cannot figure out the cause.

Usually, it is not a matter of a couple not wanting any children at all - just a matter of delaying them. Even more common is the desire to have "only two" - a boy for the father and a girl for the mother. If not attaining that in the first two tries, then there may be an attempt to fill the desired quota of at least one each by a third try. Since 65% of couples today have only one or two children and 21% have only one more, it would indicate that for over 86% of all couples, three children is the absolute maximum. If so, at that point, birth control would become an absolute. Of course, if that is the couple's philosophy, it was also probably used in preventing conception before the couple was "ready" to have children, and also to space the ones they did have.

While the modern methods of artificial birth control have certainly contributed to the present situation of small families, it also is due to couples not wanting to have to do without the modern "necessities" of life - like Rolex watches, Rolls-Royce cars, or a villa on the Riviera.

For comparison on sizes of families, let us compare figures over the last 200 years. Statistics Abstract of the United States reports that in 1790, over 35% of families had 5 children or more, by 1890 it was 11%, and in 1990 it was down to 2%. It seems that the more affluent the people in this country have become, the less children they think they can afford.

Even when family planning is valid and reasonable, the question then becomes what method of birth control will be used. For almost all couples, "birth control" and "artificial birth control" are synonymous. The only decision involves what method of artificial birth control will be used. It is seldom considered whether it is a moral method, whether it is a healthy or safe method, or even if it is a practical method. Let us look at implications of all three.

As to the moral question, the Catholic Church is the only one that says that artificial birth control is gravely sinful, because it denies God's Plan for marriage by separating the procreative and unitive aspects of sex. This position is certainly not popular (even among Catholics) but the Church does not base its beliefs on either whatever is easy or whatever is popular.

An unusual phenomena happening in this country, is while people are moving to more "natural" means of many things, from food to clothing to childbirth, there is still an increasing use of unnatural means in preventing conception.

The health hazards of artificial birth control methods are many. With the "pill" (still the most popular form of artificial birth control) side effects reported by Pharmacists For Life include anxiety, depression, insomnia, fluid retention, decreased sex drive, high blood pressure, increased incidence of (or chronic) yeast infections, breast tenderness, and irreversible facial blotching. Taking the pill for more than five years leads to a greatly increased incidence of gallbladder surgery and cholesterol levels rising which contributes to atherosclerosis and heart disease.

Even with the decreased dosage level of hormone content as of 1988, still occurring randomly with no warning are liver hepatomas, blindness, strokes, embolisms in various organs, and yes, death from cardiac arrest.

Science, however, continues to march onward blindly, and women now have an additional option of a surgically implanted device which either prevents conception or has an abortifacient effect. Its side effects are experienced by 95% of users, and include bleeding irregularities, weight gain, increased susceptibility to infections, increased irritability, absent-mindedness and loss of memory, itching, headaches, dizziness and an increase in the rate of miscarriage. It would seem that the female body is making a rather strong negative statement about these artificial means.

Even looking at it from a man's point of view, it sure looks like a case of Russian roulette, and not worth taking a chance of any of these side effects in order not to have to give up sex for a few days every month. Besides all that, artificial birth control is certainly not as effective as desired. The pill has a failure rate of 3 to 6%, foams and diaphragms have a failure rate of 10 to 15%, and the much ballyhooed condoms have a failure rate of 18 to 22%.

By using a natural method of family planning, all of the above-mentioned health hazards

can be avoided. There is such a method, and it is not only completely safe, but also has a success rate of over 99% (!) - much higher than any other method. (One of the reasons for such a high rate of success is the fact that while there is printed material available, it is also taught by one couple to another couple.)

This scientifically proven method was refined by Drs. John & Lyn Billings and was discovered in 1964. It is called the Ovulation Method, and with it a woman can tell exactly when she is fertile and when she is infertile. The Ovulation Method works on the principle that when a woman is capable of conceiving, she experiences a particular mucus secretion from the glands of the cervix which she can recognize. The changes in the physical characteristics of the mucus not only warns of the approach of ovulation, but also informs of the day of maximum fertility in the cycle. This information, therefore can be used either for abstaining from sex to avoid conception, or to aid some couples whose problem has been to achieve pregnancy.

There are two reasons the Ovulation Method is not widespread in use. The first one is that many people are not aware of it. Every new method of (dangerous) artificial birth control gets all the publicity while a more successful and safe method is seldom (if ever) mentioned. The second reason is that it would necessitate partial abstinence from sex during each month. (Most people try to convince themselves that it would cause too much hardship, but we would be interested in any documentation which proves that anyone in the course of human history has ever died from abstaining from sex - even for their whole life.)

Several examples have already been given to show that even on a practical level, there are trade-offs to be made in order to lead to good marriages. It is even more true in order to maintain good marriages. There are always trade-offs involved in God's Plan for the human race. That should be easy for good Christians to understand, as Christ had to trade His own will - indeed His own life - in order to open the Gates of Heaven for us. For us to earn entrance through those Gates, however, we have to sometimes give up our own will, regardless of how difficult it may be.

To use the eating analogy again, every bite of food does not have to be eaten with the express purpose of providing the body with its necessary nutrients for good health. There is nothing wrong with eating a candy bar snack just because you want the taste of something sweet to eat. However, it would be wrong to stick your finger in your throat to throw up, so you could have the taste without the possible consequences of the extra calories, or by having to exercise to use up those calories.

If someone does not want the consequences of the extra calories, they can simply give up the candy bar. If a couple does not want the consequences of conception, they can simply give up sex when the wife can conceive. This is the most natural method of family planning, but it *is* a matter of "trading sacrifices." If you do not want the sacrifice of another child, then you trade for the sacrifice of giving up sex a few days out of each month. Gandhi, the moral leader of India (where population is high and the standard of living is low) said that "The only birth control worthy of human beings is self-control."

Even if a woman cannot conceive during sex the rest of the month, nothing is being done artificially to prevent conception. Therefore, the two ends of sexual intercourse for married couples, the procreative factor and the unitive, are not being artificially separated.

Then there is the practical side of artificial birth control and how it effects the relationship between a husband and a wife - both in the area of sex and also in the rest of their life together. To best show the effects that all three of these areas can have on a couple, let us look at what happened to Bob and Gerri Laird as they reported in "The Family" magazine.

They were a couple who had two children - a boy and a girl - and who then started practicing artificial birth control. After two miscarriages off the pill, they tried condoms and foam but found them too messy. Using an IUD caused two infections, both of which required minor surgery. They said they felt like they were preparing for war (against conception) rather than for love. Their lovemaking had become very chemical and very mechanical. They had become "manipulators

rather than co-creators - exploiting each other at will." Even though they could have sex anytime they wanted, they were "distant and unfulfilled" in their marriage.

Then they were introduced to a different type of philosophy and a different method in following it. This philosophy is that every act of sexual intercourse should be open to the transmission of life. It is then open to a shared Love, not only between the couple themselves, but also between the couple and God.

As a result, the Lairds first of all became open to God's Will as to the creating of new life. They now have five children - and a much happier relationship and family life. They can still make decisions spacing births, but now they use the Ovulation Method - that of simply abstaining from sex when the wife is fertile.

It is surprising to many couples, but abstaining periodically from sex, rather than weakening a marriage, can actually strengthen it. The Lairds say that they struggled for several months as they tried to regain the freedoms they had lost through artificial contraception.

- Freedom to love each other daily through non-genital communication (a smile, a kiss, a hug) and develop true affection and intimacy without having to perform in the bedroom.

- Freedom to experience the physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual high of a spontaneous decision to have relations when fertile.

- Freedom to totally and completely accept God's gift of fertility and submit to His will of creating or postponing new life.

- Freedom to celebrate a "honeymoon effect" every month because of periodic abstinence.

Before regaining these freedoms, they had found that using contraceptives had made them slaves to their desires, and their relationship had become robotic. They "had lost sight of what true love really means - giving for the good of the other."

While discussing natural birth control, it is worthy to note that there is another method, the most ancient of all, which can work very well. That method is breast-feeding. While common sense may say that breast-feeding a newborn is the natural way, science has also proven that it is the best way. There are many benefits for the baby and the mother.

For the baby: 1) it is much healthier - there is improved immunity, including decreasing the following problems: ear infections, respiratory infections, meningitis, intestinal problems, and insulin-dependent diabetes. Babies have fewer allergies, fewer skin disorders (including psoriasis, diaper rash and eczema), and it helps prevent tooth decay. Mother's milk also has an amino acid in it that contributes to optimal brain growth. A recent find is that breast-fed babies also have less of a chance of weight problems as adults because their fat cells as babies were not geared to growth by the fat in cow's milk. Nursed babies are also more secure and more content.

For the mother: 1) faster recovery from childbirth, 2) lose weight faster, 3) get in shape faster, 4) reduced risk of postpartum depression and as mentioned, 5) prolonged infertility. Full-time breast feeding suppresses ovulation. As long as the baby needs nourishment and nurturing, the mother's ovulation is delayed, and by using the Billings Ovulation Method, she can recognize the signs of her returning fertility.

Benefits for both the baby and the mother include the milk always being ready, warm, the right amount and the right formula. It obviously increases the bonding between them. Part of this is due to breast-feeding being tied to all five of a baby's senses. Fortunately, the benefits of breast-feeding are getting well known again.

One truth that many people like to deny or ignore is that the separation of sex from its purpose of conception (in artificial birth control) has led to the separation of sex from the results of conception (in abortions).

The abortion mentality is a direct result of the artificial birth control mentality that preceded it. This has been shown to be true after marriage as well as before marriage. A conceived child after marriage is often considered just as much an intruder and a "problem" as one that was

conceived before marriage. It should be obvious that an abortion any time after conception is much worse than artificial birth control, as it is the killing of new life after it has already started. This is one moral question in which orthodox Catholics, Protestants, and Jews all agree.

Chesterton has already been quoted with his line, that "Sitting in a church on Sunday does not make you a Christian any more than sitting in a garage makes you a car." This is certainly true in the matter of abortion more than anything else, since most of the million and a half females in this country every year who have an abortion would claim to be "Christian." Their doctors would probably claim the same thing. With abortion it seems that neither group is obedient to the beliefs of even their own church. The most popular rationalization, it seems, is to allow an "exception," and it is always one very appealing to the emotions, such as "to save the life of the mother." Disregarded is the fact that this situation is almost so rare as to be non-existent. Even if there actually was a physical danger, one cannot kill an innocent life in order to possibly protect another. And regardless of any danger that might be present, many people forget that God still has the final decision concerning the life of the mother. He can protect that life regardless of any problem or danger that could exist.

Once abortions are allowed under an emotional-based exception, then the next step is to have the exception become the rule. This opens the door for any abortion under any excuse. That, of course, is the situation we have today.

When only "planned" children are allowed to be born, they then become simply one of the natural accessories of marriage, along with a dog, a television set, and a house. Even when artificial birth control was not used prior to the "planned" number of children being born, it usually becomes the standard after that time. Another child would be considered a "hardship," and any rationalization used for the first time to justify artificial birth control to prevent a possible conception could be the same rationalization being used for the first time to "take care" of an "accident" of conception through the grave sin of abortion.

It is interesting to note that while much media attention is being giving to breast cancer, there has been little or no acknowledgement to statistics showing that abortions are tied to a 50% increase in breast cancer in women.

The biggest moral evils never spring from nowhere. They grow from small moral evils to medium size moral evils and then to big moral evils. You must first train the conscience to be silent in disobeying God's Commandments in small matters, before it can be trained to be silent in matters of increasing importance. This is why a married couple's abortion of their own child would probably be preceded by artificial birth control before and in between the number of children "planned," and also probably in the time before they got married. There is a consistency here, but it involves taking God's purpose of the creation of sex out of context all down the line.

On the other side, a couple who was moral enough to sacrifice the satisfaction of their sex drive until they get married, will also be more willing to sacrifice it naturally for one week out of the month in order to avoid conception morally. Their spirit of sacrifice may also extend to a willingness to trade having more materialistic possessions for having more children. While there are good reasons to decide to not have more children, there is less of a chance for false reasons to be used, such as: "cannot afford on present salary" (along with a trip to Las Vegas or Hawaii every year) or "not physically good for the mother" (she does not want any more stretch marks) or "no room in our house" (for every child to have his own room) or "no time to take care of another one" (if the first child takes 100% of your time, then each succeeding one cannot take any more). All the other "false reasons" are based on a wrong philosophy or selfish attitude. If children are considered a blessing, then having more of them will be chosen over having more materialistic possessions. And for those couples, whenever another child is born, Love is not divided - it is multiplied.

It often is simply a matter of faith. Many couples trade having more than two children for a big bank account or more possessions, thinking that it brings more to their life than more children. More and more people grow old and regret that trade. It is too late then for them to trade in their

money for more children (which would also mean more grandchildren), which would also mean more Love in their lives, and which often means less loneliness. It is another case of having the wrong values when young and paying for it later.

It's all based on your philosophy concerning marriage. If you believe it is only a practical way to have companionship and sex as long as it is mutual fun for both parties, then lust, and artificial birth control, and abortion, and divorce all are logical steps whenever it is convenient. With that philosophy, children are just an accidental byproduct of marriage. If so, God's purpose for marriage is not important and no consideration is given to the well-being of any children.

If, however, you believe that marriage was created by God for His purposes first, and that having happiness in marriage depends on the couple following those purposes, then neither fornication nor adultery, nor artificial birth control, nor abortion, nor lust, nor divorce fits in His Plan. Children, however, become the most important individual element of that marriage. While they certainly bring their share of problems to a marriage, they also bring the most joy and happiness to it also. (As always, another trade-off is involved).

As a footnote, it is very interesting to note that couples who practice a natural form of child-spacing have a divorce rate of less than 2%. Coincidence?

THE BOTTOM LINE

God's definition of love is far different from the world's definition. The Bible says "God is Love." God's highest Love for us means that He wants us all to go to Heaven for all eternity. A human being's Love for another also has as its highest meaning the desire for another person to go to Heaven for all eternity.

This is why we are required to "Love thy neighbor." This is why we can "Love our enemy" and not like him. The essence of our "Love" is the concern for that person's immortal soul - not our feelings for that person.

Now the Love between a husband and a wife includes feelings, but as a Pope has said, the marriage bond does not dissolve because "feelings" lessen sooner or later after the honeymoon.

Feelings ebb and flow - and sometimes the tide is out. However, because of mutual effort and God's grace, the tide can come back in and be at a higher level than ever before. This is referring to mutual respect, understanding, patience, and many other virtues necessary to make a marriage "happy" - not just to the emotional passion of the honeymoon.

It is doubtful that most people realize that how they live their marriage vows has much to do with what they answer for on their Judgement Day.

Without any change in many people's lives as a spouse and parent, and without conforming their philosophy, attitude, and actions to God's Will, the following exchange between Christ, and specifically a Catholic, can be imagined on Judgement Day:

Christ - It's time to take a look at your entire life to see where you go, which depends on how well you followed my Will in living your vocation on Earth to its highest degree.

Spouse - I guess I'm ready.

Christ - You have no choice.

Spouse - But I didn't think I was going to die that soon.

Christ - Everyone has a certain allowable time on Earth. You were supposed to be ready for Judgement Day at all times.

Spouse - But

Christ - No buts. There are no excuses any more. While you are on Earth, the devil tempts you in everything - to choose to do wrong and also to choose not to do right. If you work at it, your feeble mind can accept those excuses as legitimate. You can convince yourself and others that wrong is right and right is wrong. Up here, however, Truth is all that counts.

Your life will now be evaluated by that absolute Truth.

Spouse - Okay.

Christ - *Were you born and raised Catholic?*

Spouse - Yes.

Christ - *It was a grace from me that you were. Only one-sixth of the population are baptized into the True Church. You were one of the fortunate ones. It was a privilege and a responsibility. Were you taught right and wrong?*

Spouse - Yes.

Christ - *For the moment, we are going to concentrate on one area in your life - your marriage.*

Spouse - Oh-oh.

Christ - *Hold that thought. Before you got married, did you know that the Catholic Church taught the indissolubility of marriage?*

Spouse - Yes.

Christ - *So you knew that I said, "What God has joined together, let no man but asunder. "*

Spouse - Yes.

Christ - *Didn't you know that "no man" also included the United States Court System ? .*

Spouse - I assumed

Christ - *Then you assumed wrong. Any perceived ignorance about a specific aspect of a generally understood principle, is no excuse.*

Spouse - I guess I didn't tie the two together.

Christ - *Well, you should have. Let us cover the time before you were married. Did you go to marriage preparation?*

Spouse - Yes.

Christ - *So you knew the Church's teaching on marriage and the meaning of the vow you were planning to take.*

Spouse - Yes.

Christ - *And you were sane at the time ?*

Spouse - Yes.

Christ - *And you were not forced to marry - it was a choice of your free will?*

Spouse - Yes.

Christ - *We are going to examine those vows you took. But first, let's look at a little background on marriage. I could have set up any system on Earth for human beings. I could have made you like a female turtle. You would have been impregnated by a male turtle acting under instinct, who had absolutely no concern for your welfare. Then you would lay your eggs on a beach - another case of acting totally under instinct - and left them there to hatch with absolutely no concern for their welfare. They would hatch on their own and be at the complete mercy of predators and the elements. That's the way I made turtles. With humans, however, I had another plan - one which was different from turtles and all other animals. To humans I first gave an immortal soul - which no animals have. I also gave them reason and free will, two more things that no animals have. These are great privileges, but with every privilege comes a corresponding responsibility. With great privileges come great responsibilities. That responsibility includes using reason and free will to either serve Me, or not serve Me. If humans use it to serve Me and follow my Will, then their reward will be Heaven. If they use it to reject my Will and to serve themselves and not me, their punishment would be Hell. Purgatory is for those not serving me well enough, but their final destination is Heaven - after, however paying a higher price in purgatory that they would have paid on Earth. All humans after Adam and Eve are also born to a world with the effects of Original Sin. You will always have a tendency to sin, and it will be increased by actual temptations of*

the devil - a prideful, disobedient angel from Hell who wants all humans to be prideful and disobedient like him - and also spend eternity in Hell.

It would served no purpose to try to explain to you why I set this whole system up - why I created angels - knowing some would turn into devils, and why I created human beings when knowing so many would also disobey me and go to Hell. Your finite mind cannot understand infinite matters. The only thing that counts here, is that I gave you an immortal soul, a conscience, and a Catholic Church and Pope to be an infallible guide for that conscience to follow, in order to choose right over wrong to get to Heaven. The thing that counts now is who or what you chose to follow.

Spouse - I do accept that you are God and that you made the rules.

Christ - *Hold that thought too. Let's now look at My Plan for marriage. When I came to Earth I set up Seven Sacraments - ways to gain supernatural grace in order to help you live a better life and get to Heaven. I raised marriage to the level of a sacrament. My Plan has been for a husband and a wife to help each other get to Heaven. It has always been my Plan for children - the most helpless living organism to be born - to be raised in a home with Love (My definition first), affection, understanding, patience, kindness, and a hundred other good virtues. These virtues are to be exemplified specifically by the actions between the father and mother to each other, to any and all their children, and to other people in society in general.*

No sacramental marriage is forced, so when a man and a woman freely marry, they choose marriage as their vocation, as their daily means of getting themselves to Heaven, and helping their spouse and children to get to Heaven.

This is the reason for the vows. Getting married is not like just taking a job that you can just quit at any time for any reason. Let's examine the vows YOU took.

Spouse - Do we have to?

FOR HUSBANDS

Christ - *Why did you leave your wife ?*

Husband - I wasn't attracted to her anymore.

Christ - *Were you attracted to her when you got married?*

Husband - Yes, but she gained more weight after each child was born.

Christ - *Maybe she could have worked harder at retaining her former weight, but that's never a reason to leave her.*

Husband - But the women at my office started looking better, and I couldn't help being especially attracted to one of them.

Christ - *There's nothing unusual about being attracted to another woman, and not even anything wrong with it as long as there is no lust involved - either mentally or physically. Did you have lustful thoughts about her?*

Husband - I couldn't help it.

Christ - *You couldn't help being tempted by those thoughts, but willing to continue thinking about them is a choice.*

Husband - But I tried at first.

Christ - *Not good enough.*

Husband - But she came on to me first.

Christ - *So it appealed to your ego, right?*

Husband - I guess so.

Christ - *Well, you guess right. Did you also guess right that committing adultery with her was a mortal sin?*

Husband- Yes, but I was sorry for it.
 Christ - *You had a guilty conscience after the first time. But you were not sorry enough that you avoided doing it again more than once.*
 Husband - I couldn't help myself.
 Christ - *Oh, yes you could have. If I could pass on the temptation of the devil when he offered me the whole world, you could have passed on the temptation of a woman for illicit sex. And we're not even talking yet about the times after that when you went looking for it.*
 Husband - But my wife no longer filled my needs.
 Christ - *That's a lie. Your wife could fill all your needs, but she couldn't fill all your fantasies. No woman can.*
 Husband - But I fell in love with my mistress.
 Christ - *Actually you fell in lust with her. There's a big difference. In fact, there's all the difference in the world. When you many and promise to love, honor, and cherish "till death do you part," you fulfill that vow by living it out in another part of that vow, "For better or for worse." There's nothing in the vows about "until my wife gains weight, " or "until a sexier woman comes along." You broke that holiest of vows.*
 Husband - Oh-oh.
 Christ - *Hold that thought.*

 FOR WIVES

Christ - *Yes. Didn't your vows include "for better or worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health?"*
 Wife - Yes.
 Christ - *So why did you leave your husband?*
 Wife - He wasn't ambitious enough and wasn't making enough money.
 Christ - *Did you ever go without eating, or not have clothes on your back, or have a place to live.*
 Wife - No.
 Christ - *Then you evidently weren't satisfied with the food you had, the cost of your clothes, and the size of your house. But no man owes his wife the best materialistic items money can buy. Besides, was your vow "for richer or poorer, " or was it "if you make a certain amount of money?"*
 Wife - For richer or poorer.
 Christ - *Did you mean it at the time ?*
 Wife - Yes.
 Christ - *Then you're not allowed to disavow that commitment. The whole idea of the vows is to cover the best and worst situations that arise in marriage, That's why they are "for better or worse, "in sickness and in health", and "for richer or for poorer, " They're not "for better, in health, and for richer." You are not allowed to desert your vows because of falling to temptations of the devil after you got married to envy other people's monetary level of living.*
 Wife - Oh-oh.
 Christ - *Like I said, hold that thought. Now after saying those other vows, didn't you say, "till death do us part."*
 Wife - Yes.
 Christ - *Are you saying you lied on the altar?*
 Wife - I meant it at the time.
 Christ - *So what changed?*
 Wife - I didn't feel that same toward him as I did the day we got married.
 Christ - *That is the whole point. The "feelings" in marriage are a bonus - not the essence of it. My*

sacrament is "till death do us part," not "till a lessening of romantic feelings do us part." or "till I meet someone sexier," or "till divorce do us part." I don't allow marriage contracts for a number of years with escape clauses or renewable option periods. A vow for life is just that - a vow for life.

Wife - Oh-oh.

Christ - Hold that thought.

FOR BOTH

Christ - And it gets even worse. On top of all that, you destroyed the security and happiness and home life of the children which I gave to you. I said that if someone even so much as scandalizes little children, "it would be better for a millstone to be tied around their head." Didn't you think that destroying a good part of your children's happiness, and being a bad example to them as a parent who deserts their vows, falls under "scandalizing" them?

Spouse - I didn't want them to grow up in a home where their parents weren't in love with each other .

Christ - There you go with the "feelings" excuse again. A married couple can - and should - show respect, consideration, and kindness to each other even when "feelings" are not at their highest - or even there. It is not only unreasonable to think that feelings will always remain on the honeymoon level - it is impossible for them to do so. If you had been raised in a civilization where marriage was just a social activity and your marriage was only understood by you since childhood to be a temporary desire for personal, selfish pleasure and convenience, and you had no marriage preparation which suggested anything different - then you would have a point in your favor. Unfortunately for you, that is not the case. I created marriage for My purpose and my Plan - not just for your temporary satisfaction. AND YOU KNEW THAT.

Spouse - But I was negatively influenced by movies, television, and other people.

Christ - No excuse. Children sometimes have influences they cannot control, but once you're an adult, what and who influences you becomes a choice. You knew splitting up the family and divorce was wrong, but you did it anyway. That was also your choice. And the choices you make on Earth is what determines the choice of where you go after you die.

Spouse - Oh-oh.

Christ - And after all your falling to the temptation of the devil who used your "feelings" to get you to justify the breaking of my Commandments and your vows, you still had one final chance to go back to the marriage, fulfill your vows, and work at the qualities and actions to make your marriage happy or at the least successful enough to help yourself and your spouse get to Heaven - as well as provide the proper home for your children. No matter what some people try to make themselves and others believe to placate their conscience, a child who grows up in separate homes of their two parents is scarred psychologically for life. Like I said, though, you had one last chance.

Spouse - When was that?

Christ - That was when you had a book in your hands which reminded you of your vows and what they meant, and suggested what would happen to you on Judgement Day if you abandoned those vows. Did you read it?

Spouse - Yes.

Christ - What did you do as a result ?

Spouse - _____

APPENDIX A

Marriage is always 3 Ways:

Spiritual:

HUSBAND - WIFE - GOD

Mental & Physical:

HUSBAND - WIFE - CHILDREN

APPENDIX B

COMMUNICATION METERS

Even between husbands and wives (or especially between husbands and wives), communication is sometimes difficult. Making a pie-shaped graph with a pointer may help communicate feelings or thoughts. These should be positive as well as negative.

SAMPLE ONES FOR WIVES TO USE

I Love You.
Let's talk
I'm upset at you.
The Children need more of your time.
I'm broke
You're a good husband.
Thanks.
I could use some more affection.
Everything is fine.
Please give more details when talking to me.
You're a good father.
It would be nice if you did something romantic.
You're a good provider.
(Fill in your own.)

SAMPLE ONES FOR HUSBANDS TO USE

I Love You.
You're a good wife.
Is anything wrong?
Let's talk.
I admire your patience with the children.
Please don't nag.
The house could use some dusting & vacuuming.
You're a good mother.
Please give me less details when talking to me.
I'm broke too.
The children need more of your time.
Everything is fine.
Please support my discipline.
(Fill in your own.)