

Biblical Counseling 301 – Class Six

July 15, 2018 *Marriage Counseling*

Marriage is the operation by which a woman's vanity and a man's egotism are extracted without anesthesia. (Columnist Helen Rowland)

I. Three Primary Goals for Marriage Counseling

9:10-9:55

- **Discern where unity is broken**
- Communication
- Destructive Patterns (For more on “a,” read S. Stanley, et al, *A Lasting Promise*)
 1. Escalation
 2. Invalidation
 3. Negative Interpretations
 4. Withdrawal and Avoidance
- Biblical Principles (For more on “b,” read E. Eggerichs’ Love and Respect.)
 1. Ephesians 4:25-32, especially 4:29
 2. Matthew 7:1-6
- Expectations
- A huge portion of marriage problems come down to expectations, even though we are to have a covenant relationship in marriage (Mal. 2:14) based on grace.
- Expectations boil down to laws – as in, I have good reason to expect “X” or “Y.” But such “laws” are not grace and presuppose that we have the right to judge.
- Like God has with us in His covenant with us, we have been called to make a 100-0 commitment to our spouse, not 50-50.
- Our expectations become demands which **replace love** (See *Marriage Builder*)
- Joined commitments
- Any area where decisions, participation and consequences are joined, (such as parenting, discipline, school, money, sex, holidays, household responsibilities, use of time, in-law relationships, etc.) is fertile ground for division and conflict. The reason for conflict is not the specific area of conflict (e.g., vacations or money), but the decisions made by each spouse to prefer themselves over their spouse. (Phil. 2:3)
- The antidote to conflict in these areas is to recognize that conflict show where “what I want” is more important to me than oneness, and to repent of that self-oriented focus. Not saying that is easy; just saying it is the biblical antidote.
- Roles – see “II C” below
 - Proper functioning in roles (according to biblical guidelines) can do a great deal to head off conflict/division. Understanding how to do that requires studying those same roles.
- **Spiritual assessment and plan**
- Clear testimonies of relationship with the Lord? Is the gospel clear? Do they understand that they can be confident, assured of a relationship with the Lord? (1 John 5:13) Do they

understand that it is by grace through faith? (Eph. 2:8-9) Are they clear on what Christ has done for them and not vice versa? (Romans 4:5)

- What is their maturity level? Need to decide how fast to move, and how much ground to cover. They may have a strong commitment to the Lord but are blind to what each of them contributes to the problem. Or their commitment to the Lord may be immature, lacking Bible knowledge. You may need to start more slowly.
 - What is their growth commitment?
 - a. Do they understand and are they committed to progressive sanctification? (Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 5:9; Col. 1:28) You may have to teach this basic principle.
 - b. Biblical dependency? (Matt. 7:24-28; Rom. 10:17; 2 Tim. 3:16-17)
 - c. Biblical confidence? (Psalm 19:7-12; 2 Peter 1:2-3; 1:19-21)
 - d. Renunciation of their own wisdom? (Proverbs 16:25)
 - e. Readiness to repent? (2 Cor. 12:21; 2 Tim. 2:25; Rev. 2:5, 16, 21-22; 3:3, 19)
 - f. Do they understand blindness/deceit of their own heart? (Jer. 17:9)
 - 4. What is their grasp of their need for community and commitment to local church?
 - a. Eph. 4:1-16
 - b. Romans 12
 - c. Titus 2:1-8
 - d. Hebrews 3:12-15 (10:24-25)
 - **Role assessment and plan** (plan should emerge from areas of demonstrated weakness)
 - **The counselors** needs a clear understanding God's call on the man and woman. *Biblical Pillars* course, *Rocking the Roles* by Robert Lewis, or articles on CBMW website can help.
2. Examine the three parts of functional family life (from Dr. Tom Parker, formerly DTS):
- a. Husband is in charge
 - b. Husband and wife are on the same page
 - c. Children know they are not in charge
- .
- Help the husband examine himself for eleven things specific to husbands:
 - a. Does he accept his role as head of (leader for) his wife? (Eph. 5:23)
 - b. Does he live with her "according to understanding"? (1 Peter 3:7)
 - c. Does he treat her as a "weaker vessel" since she is a woman? (1 Pet. 3:7)
 - d. Does he treat her as an equal recipient of the grace of God? (1 Pet. 3:7)
 - e. Does he willingly lay his life down for her (or does he lay down her life for his, i.e., throw her under the bus)? (Eph. 5:25)
 - f. Does he recognize his sacrificial relationship with her as a parallel of Christ's relationship to the church? (Eph. 5:25)
 - g. Does he grasp that he has a sanctifying effect on her? (Eph. 5:26-27)
 - h. Does he permit the curse of "thorn and thistle" to preoccupy him over his responsibility to care for her and for the kids? (Gen. 3:17-19)

- i. Does he repent of where “masal” (rule harshly) as Gen. 3:16 warned happens?
 - j. Does he love her as commanded in Eph. 5:32 (see 1 Cor. 13)?
 - k. Does he work to provide for her and for rest of family (1 Tim. 5:8)?
- Third, help the wife examine herself for six things.
 - a. Does she see herself as his helper in aloneness and in filling the earth and in subduing it? (Genesis 2:18, ff.)
 - b. Does she willingly submit herself under his headship by refusing to take over, and refusing to try to verbally control or pressure him, realizing that is how she shows submission to Christ? (Eph. 5:21-24)
 - c. Does she respect him (Eph. 5:32) and love him (Titus 2:5)?
 - d. Does she speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:25), unfrightened by fear (1 Peter 3:6)?
 - e. Does she take care of the house and love her children sacrificially (Titus 2:4-5)?
 - f. Does she work hard to be a great value to her husband (Prov. 31:10-31)?

- **Additional Marriage Counseling Principles 10:00-10:25**

- Regarding ‘Counseling Proper’
 - 1. You have learned about and practiced the idea of “building involvement.” In Marriage Counseling, everything you learned about gaining involvement – *getting their ok for you to be involved, drawing out their commitment to the process, and submitting it all to the Lord* – is twice the job. You need to do it with each person. The first video we saw a few months ago of Randy Patten with Deb and Trey was a good example of the things you need to do to maintain involvement with each person (you saw the fruit of it with the second video). Really, each step in counseling a couple is twice the job, but the first place you have to get used to it is in the stages of ***gaining involvement*** and ***gathering data***.
- The couple doing the counseling does not need to have the whole session mapped out, as to who will speak and when. But you do need to come up with a plan that you are both committed to following. It will take 30 minutes or so to map it out. For example:
 - a. We will go over this homework (record of the assignment you gave should be written in front of you).
 - b. She-CR will ask about this and he-CR will ask about this. If X or Y comes up, (like he didn’t do his homework or she is minimizing much of what he says), he CR will address the issue with the guy and she CR will address the issue with the girl. (Please do not take these as wooden and absolute, but just have some guiding principles you get from the Word. For example, since biblically women do not teach men (1 Tim. 2), and since biblically women

help women (Titus 2:2-6), you *generally* follow such principles and you do that as a team.

c. We will try to teach and emphasize this principle from these two passages.

d. We will try to give them homework on these two things.

- Generally, I advise meeting a married couple together the first session, to hear what is happening and what they each want to change. For couples who are both pretty ready to work, and where there is some functional maturity, you can often keep them together the whole time. Where there is a lot of tension, distance or harshness, you may need to separate and work with them individually for a while during counseling.
- Because conflict between a couple should expose their sin, including their idols, you must be prepared to dispense liberal doses of the gospel.
- **Homework**
- **Open Notes Test**. See questions on and answer on pages 5-6. Share answers at table next week.
- Please spend at least thirty minutes reading through the workbook we are giving you. If married, choose one exercise to do with your wife or husband this week and one the following week.

Marriage Counseling Test

1. What are the three **primary goals** of marriage counseling?

a.

b.

c.

2. What are the four areas **unity often breaks** down?

a.

b.

c.

d.

3. What are the four most prominent **examples** of communication breakdown?

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.

4. What are the **two biblical principles** which help a communication breakdown?

- a.
- b.

5. What are the **four spiritual assessments** required and why?

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.

6. What are the **three areas** of family roles which determine functionality?

- a.
- b.
- c.

7. List **five out of eleven** things about a man's role that determine how effectively he is impacting his family for good, and provide scripture.

- a.
- b.
- c.

d.

e.

8. List **three of six** things about a woman's role that help determine how effectively she is impacting her family for good, and provide scripture.

a.

b.

c.

9. What are 3-4 of the things you need to coordinate with your counseling partner if you end up doing marriage counseling?