

*Searching for Life's True Purpose*

PERSPECTIVES ON MORALITY AND ETHICS

# Building Healthy Marriages



INTERNATIONAL EDUCATIONAL  
FOUNDATION



*Eighth, Ninth & Tenth in a Series*

**SEARCHING FOR LIFE'S TRUE PURPOSE**

*Perspectives on Morality and Ethics*

# Building Healthy Marriages

INTERNATIONAL EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION

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## Other Volumes in This Series

The content of these presentations is the product of the International Educational Foundation's involvement in hundreds of conferences, beginning in the former Soviet Union and then expanding to China and other countries. Our organization has been working with educators and other professionals in response to the moral and ethical challenges that have accompanied the rapid economic and social transformations in those countries. At the conclusion of each of these important events, the team of lecturers and writers reviewed each presentation and offered proposals for improvement. That process of development continues. Therefore, the volume that you now hold in your hands is more of a beginning than an end.

This is part of the series, *Searching for Life's True Purpose: Perspectives on Morality and Ethics*. Topics covered in other volumes include:

- The need for moral education
- Universal principles and life goals
- The family as the school of love
- The consequences of the sexual revolution
- Family life education: which road to take?
- An ethic of true love and sexuality
- Causes and resolution of conflict
- Drug abuse prevention

This volume is designed to fulfill several functions: as a manual for lecturers, as a resource for people wishing to deepen their understanding of the topic, and as a general introduction to IEF's perspectives on the value of marriage. The content set apart in boxes supplements the text. The colored rectangles in the text mark a change in slides.

# Acknowledgements

I would like to gratefully acknowledge the meaningful guidance and inspiration for this project provided by Hyun Jin Moon, president of World Collegiate Association for the Research of the Principle (CARP). Furthermore, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the sincere investment of heart and effort by all of the writers, researchers, presenters, artists and organizers who have cooperated in this endeavor. The writers of the present volume: Ittetsu Aoki, Robert Beebe, Jack Corley, Tony Devine, Alice Huang, Hui Chen Liu, Jacques Marion and Thomas Phillips have imparted lessons gained from their extensive experience presenting these ideas in countries all over the world. Thomas Phillips served as senior editor, and Frank Kaufmann gave valuable input. This project was further enhanced by the contribution of our researchers, Gareth Davies and Laurent Ladouce, and our associate editor, Joy Pople. In the course of this project, they have collaborated with their colleagues in the United States, who graciously offered their expertise and fruits of their ongoing research. Thus, special gratitude is given to Josephine Hauer, Alan Saunders, June Saunders, John R. Williams and Andrew Wilson. Many others provided invaluable support for this project. Istvan Sleder, Prince Iambi and Mike Wang created the beautiful slides that enhance IEF's presentations. Special recognition is due to all the donors who provided valuable financial support. It is impossible to name everyone who contributed; nevertheless, their efforts are deeply appreciated.

Dr. Joon Ho Seuk  
Director of the writers' team  
President, IEF International

# Preface

Loving relationships and family are basic life goals. Men and women are complementary beings, meant to interact in harmony through giving and receiving love. This is how people experience the greatest joy.

The marriage relationship has the potential for a lifetime of growth and fulfillment. In the face of modern trends that erode the central role of marriage, it is wise to educate young people for success in this noble endeavor. A marriage culture values marriage and mobilizes resources to support and strengthen married couples.

Because moral values are declining and people are losing sight of the significance of marriage, many parts of the world are witnessing an epidemic of broken families and youth problems. Dr. Sun Myung Moon and Mrs. Hak Ja Han Moon established the International Educational Foundation (IEF) to develop theoretical and practical strategies for teaching values to young people, raising them up to become responsible and caring adults, and empowering them for roles as spouses and parents. These presentations are based on their vision for preparing youth for marriage, promoting a marriage culture and building healthy marriages. They are amplifications of the third realm of heart—the spouse's realm—as introduced in the presentation on the Family as the School of Love.

Some of this material was developed for marriage rededication ceremonies. In China, for example, IEF has collaborated with governmental and non-governmental organizations dedicated to promoting family culture as an essential element of what the Chinese call "spiritual civilization." Two-day conferences on topics such as "Family Ethics and Spiritual Civilization" were held throughout the country. The presentation on Promoting a Marriage Culture introduced the True Love Blessing Festivals which concluded these conferences. In a joyous atmosphere, thousands of couples of all ages renewed their marriage vows, raising hopes for a regeneration of family values that could have positive influence on the world. As one participant remarked, "The organizers are declaring to those in confusion and contemplating divorce, that 'til death do us part' is still a valid and achievable marriage ideal."

I hope that through these presentations you too will find renewed inspiration about the value of marriage and benefit from this practical guidance for success in marriage.

Dr. Joon Ho Seuk



*Searching for Life's True Purpose*

PERSPECTIVES ON MORALITY AND ETHICS

# Successful Marriage Preparation



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8

*Eighth in a Series*

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# Introduction: The Value of Marriage

## Loving Relationships & Family Are a Basic Life Goal



Marriage is one of the most highly prized of all human relationships and a central goal in life. Most people want for themselves and their children a good and lasting marriage, because marriage plays an important role in their quest for meaning, happiness and fulfillment. These presentations offer guidance for building healthy marriages.

Marriage seals our most central destiny, which is to find meaning and value in love. Marriage naturally has social, economic and biological functions, with accompanying duties and responsibilities. Marriage is the most basic and universal social institution, charged with the central responsibility for raising children and caring for family members. Researchers state: "In virtually every society into which historians or anthropologists have inquired, one finds ... marriage." Since marriage has emotional, social and procreative dimensions, it involves a contract in most societies. Marriage often marks the rite of passage from adolescence into adulthood. In traditional cultures marriage is not an individual matter, because it merges two family lineages. Through marriage, people acquire obligations to a community and a network of relatives. Marriage marks a person's vertical and horizontal position in the social fabric.

## Personal Benefits of Marriage



- ✦ Longer life
- ✦ Health
- ✦ Happiness
- ✦ Inner growth

There is growing evidence that healthy, lasting marriages bring many other benefits to husband, wife and children.<sup>2</sup> In the United States, 90 percent of married women and men live to at least 65 years of age, while those without a spouse (whether they are widowed, divorced or never married) have only a 65 to 70 percent chance of living to age 65.<sup>3</sup> Married people are healthier than non-married adults; they have fewer diseases and they often recover more quickly from illness than people without a supportive life partner. Moreover, married people experience greater psychological health; they have lower rates of severe depression<sup>4</sup> and report higher levels of personal happiness than the general population.<sup>5</sup>

Married couples are more secure financially than single people, better able to handle the ups and downs of life, and more productive in the workplace.

Traditional wisdom recognizes the value of marriage. The 18th-century American statesman, Benjamin Franklin, offered the following testimonial to marriage: "A single Man has not nearly the Value he would have in that State of Union. He is an incomplete Animal. He resembles the odd Half of a Pair of Scissors. If you get a prudent healthy Wife, your Industry in your Profession, with her good Economy, will be a Fortune sufficient."<sup>6</sup>

Research confirms these observations. Economist Robert Schoeni compared men's earnings in 14 developed countries. In virtually every country studied, married men earn much more than unmarried men. For example, in the United States, married men earn 30 percent more than never-married men.<sup>8</sup> Being married also seems to encourage people to create and retain wealth; the longer they stay married the greater the wealth they accumulate.<sup>9</sup>

Furthermore, children of married parents stand a better chance of becoming happy, successful adults with stable marriages of their own. "A nuclear family of father, mother and their children ... is still today a child's best guarantee for success," in the words of one sociologist.

The quality of the marriage depends on the foundation of character that the bride and groom bring to their union and on their continued growth in heart as spouses and parents. Furthermore, the quality of heart and character nurtured in the family has an impact on every aspect of a person's involvement in society. Therefore, communities and nations benefit from healthy marriages and families.

These presentations show how the universal principles of true love apply to the second life goal, which is to form loving relationships and a family. They also show how marriage can provide opportunities for growth in heart and character. In light of the central importance of marriage, it makes sense to consider how best to prepare young people for marriage and create a culture that supports marriage. Thus, the first presentation identifies the crucial resources that young people bring to a marriage. The second presentation shows how divorce, single parenthood and cohabitation have been

## Personal Benefits of Marriage



- ✦ Wealth
- ✦ Resilience
- ✦ Productivity

## Best Environment for Children



*"A nuclear family of father, mother and their children ... is still today a child's best guarantee for success."*

Bozicevic, 1998



eroding the centrality of marriage and offers a hopeful vision of marriage. The third presentation explains the principles of true love that can help couples build a healthy marriage.

<sup>1</sup> James Q. Wilson, *The Moral Sense* (New York: Free Press, 1993), p. 158.

<sup>2</sup> For a comprehensive review of research see Linda J. Waite and Maggie Gallagher, *The Case for Marriage: Why Married People Are Happier, Healthier, and Better off Financially* (New York: Doubleday, 2000).

<sup>3</sup> Hara Estroff Marano, "Debunking the Marriage Myth: It Works for Women, Too," *New York Times*, August 4, 1998.

<sup>4</sup> Les Parrott III and Leslie Parrott, *Questions Couples Ask* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), p. 65.

<sup>5</sup> Marano, "Debunking the Marriage Myth."

Benjamin Franklin, *Poor Richard's Almanac*.

Robert Schoeni, "The Earnings Effects of Marital Status: An International Comparison," *Luxembourg Income Study*, Paper No. 42, February 1990. This paper investigated the impact of marriage on the incomes of males ages 25 to 64 in 12 countries.

<sup>6</sup> Waite & Gallagher, *The Case for Marriage*, p. 100.

"Ibid.", p. 115.

lo Brigitte Berger, "The Social Roots of Prosperity and Liberty," *Society* 35/3 (Mar-Apr 1998), pp. 44-54.

## PART 1: The Need for Marriage Preparation

Mr. J. Paul Getty, the richest man in the world at the time of his death in 1976, said, "I hate and regret the failure of my marriages. I would gladly give up my millions for one lasting marital success." He was a billionaire and a graduate of the prestigious Oxford University. Each of his five marriages ended in divorce. Wealth, education and social status do not guarantee success in affairs of the heart. The ultimate source of human satisfaction comes through loving family relationships.

In most societies, a wedding is considered to be one of the most important moments in a person's life, along with birth and death. Even in secularized societies, the large amount of money people spend to create an unforgettable wedding ceremony is evidence of the esteem in which marriage is held.

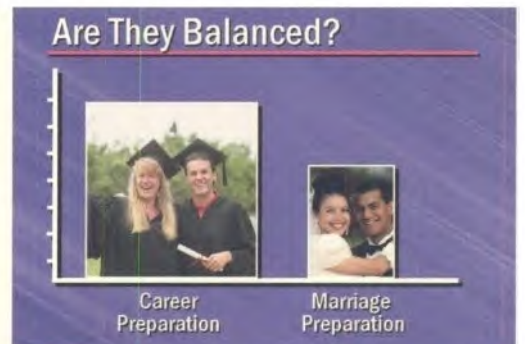
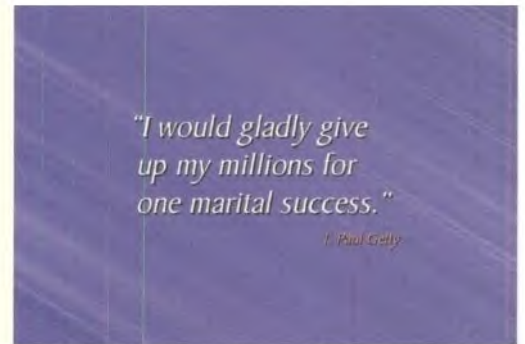
Nevertheless, formal education focuses on career preparation, with little attention to marriage preparation. The priorities of modern society are often out of balance. Popular culture exaggerates material values and neglects human relationships.

Why are we focusing on preparing young people for marriage?

- We want their life and character to be enriched, based on the practice of true love.
- We want them to experience the loving relationship: that are created and nurtured through marriage and family.
- We want them to develop the loving home and family that will contribute to the well-being of the community and the nation.

Preparation for marriage is an emotional, intellectual and practical empowerment for the challenges of living as a couple. When parents create a warm atmosphere of love and care in their home, this offers their children the resources for becoming a loving husband or wife and loving parents.

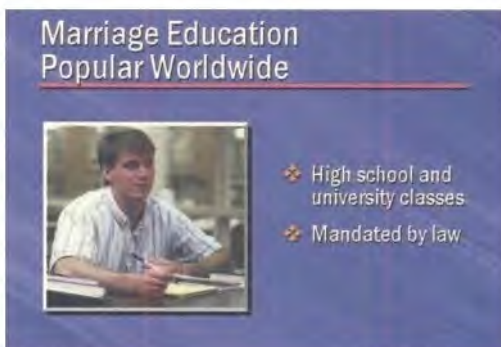
The parents' greatest joy is to see their children grow to develop mature character, form loving relationships and a



family, and make a contribution to society. Grandparents proudly display photos and drawings of their children and grandchildren, who are the ultimate dividends of their investment of heart.

In traditional societies, preparation for marriage generally involves the family and the clan. Children learn from their parents and elders the knowledge and skills needed to manage a household and support a family. Spiritual advisors guide adolescents through the transition into adulthood, and intermediaries may assist in finding a suitable partner. Weddings are often elaborate ceremonies, and the extended family guides and supports the new couple in establishing their home.

With the erosion of marriage in modern society, these traditional sources of support are diminishing. Therefore, wise teachers and policy makers consider how to formalize marriage preparation and educate young people to become good husbands and wives and good parents. Public officials can create policies that will encourage young people to marry and support them in their efforts to build strong families. The nations that develop the best strategies for mobilizing youthful energy and promoting a marriage culture will emerge as world leaders.



Marriage education is being promoted in high schools and universities in some parts of the United States. In Oklahoma, which has the second highest divorce rate in the nation, representatives from churches, businesses, government, the mass media and community organizations organized conferences on how to promote lasting marriage. One decision was to establish marriage education courses for high school students. Other systematic public-policy initiatives have been established, with successful results.<sup>2</sup> The state of Florida requires all public high schools to teach relationship skills, such as effective communication and conflict resolution. South Dakota offers high school students throughout the state a course on building relationships.

There is a growing movement dedicated to teaching relationship skills in schools. Programs vary in duration from two weeks to a semester. Some programs are part of a comprehensive character education curriculum, while others focus specifically on marriage preparation. Parents have applauded the programs, wishing that they had received similar guidance.


Singapore is a nation committed to better preparing its young people for marriage. As in many technologically advanced countries, the pressure on young people to achieve is intense; it often distracts them from aspirations for a happy marriage and family life. Recognizing that successful marriages and families are the key elements in preserving their nation's advancement, the Ministry of Community Development and Sports created literature about marriage preparation for young couples of various ethnic groups.

Sometimes there is a gap between mandatory education and the heart of freely choosing to pursue such goals. The anticipation of lasting love can be a powerful motivator for young people to focus on developing good character. In the springtime of their life, adolescents are inclined to romance and adventure. Their intellect has developed to the stage where they think about the meaning of life and other philosophical questions. While they are dreaming of ideals and pondering deep questions, young people are receptive to guidance. Having grown up in an era of broken marriages and single parenthood, young people are searching for an empowering vision for establishing a loving home and family. They want to hear that all who invest the effort to build their character can attain the noble ideal of a lasting and happy marriage.

More than three quarters of U.S. teenagers state that marriage and family are very important goals in life.<sup>3</sup> Marriage is a focal point of core ideals such as love, happiness and fulfillment, and young people look for guides and mentors who embody the ideal of love.

The responsibility for educating young people in matters of the heart has always fallen upon the parents, teachers, community leaders, religious leaders and shapers of popular culture. Those who embrace this calling deserve the highest respect.

### Marriage Education & Character Education



Preparation for lasting love — Rationale for adolescents to develop their character

### Strongly Desired

- ✦ 78% of teenagers consider marriage and family very important

Source: 1991, Survey Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan



## PART 2.

# Personal Resources

The foundation for marriage is the personal resources that the man and woman bring to their relationship.

### A. Integrity

To fully love another human being in the intimate bond of marriage is perhaps the greatest challenge that we face in life. An engaged couple may think of marriage preparation in terms of planning the wedding ceremony and festivities, but parents and educators know that the bride and groom bring the fruit of their whole range of life experiences to the wedding.

Integrity is the foundation of good character and, therefore, the foundation of a good marriage. Integrity involves adherence to a moral code and the ability to live up to one's commitments.

Integrity means being whole and having a center. In contrast, corruption is the absence of a center. We form our identity by harmonizing our inner self and our outer self, our mind and body. Integrity deals with mind/body unity, the harmony between words and deeds. It has been suggested that the internal union between a person's mind and body should precede the external union of husband and wife.

Furthermore, integrity means embodying the values of truth, beauty and goodness for the sake of our conscience and for the joy of those connected to us. It means cultivating the self-discipline to be faithful to our own values.

Each person is unique. An important part of the growing process is cultivating our individual interests, talents and skills. Harmonizing all these aspects of our being builds self-respect and enables us to be at peace with ourselves and create a harmonious and peaceful environment. Adolescents love to learn about themselves. Taking personality inventories is helpful in marriage preparation, because this gives feedback on what challenges to expect in relationships and what to look for in a spouse.

*"For one human being to love another: That is perhaps the most difficult of all our tasks..."*

*—C. S. Lewis*

#### Value of Integrity



- ✦ Basis of keeping marriage commitments
- ✦ Foundation for self-confidence

#### Integrity



- ✦ Clear moral values
- ✦ Living up to them
- ✦ Self-discipline

#### Personal Development



- ✦ Cultivating interests and talents
- ✦ Building self-respect
- ✦ Managing one's feelings
- ✦ Fostering peace with oneself

People who do not honor and respect themselves cannot insist on being honored and respected by others. If people lack self-respect and self-worth, they may manipulate others in an attempt to fill the void. Yet people cannot give what they do not have. Those who are desperate for any kind of affirmation are vulnerable to exploitation.

A marriage is as strong as the individuals who make up the marriage. To make a whole union, husband and wife need to be complete themselves. It is helpful for adolescents to cultivate solitude and learn to enjoy their own company. Cultivating our inner resources produces an abundance to be shared with our spouse.

Integrity includes a willingness to take responsibility. We determine our destiny by following the voice of our conscience. Mature people take responsibility for their circumstances, build on their strengths and fill in areas of weakness.

Regardless of the circumstances, we can choose what attitude to take. "The most important characteristic of a marriageable person is the habit of happiness," according to counselors Judd and Mary Landis.<sup>4</sup> Happiness is one of the most valuable gifts one can bring to a marriage.

### Take Personal Responsibility



- ✦ For one's circumstances
- ✦ For one's strengths and weaknesses

*"The most important characteristic of a marriageable person is the habit of happiness."*

Judd and Mary Landis - Building Successful Marriage

## Universal Principles Illuminate Marriage Preparation

**T**he presentation on Universal Principles and Life Goals explores the principle of duality as the basis for all relationships. For instance, all things have an internal character and an external form. In addition, all things have the attributes of positivity and negativity, or masculinity and femininity. These dual aspects interact as subject partner and object partner. The interaction of character and form enables a being to grow towards maturity or completion, and the interaction of positive and

negative elements enables the being to expand and multiply.

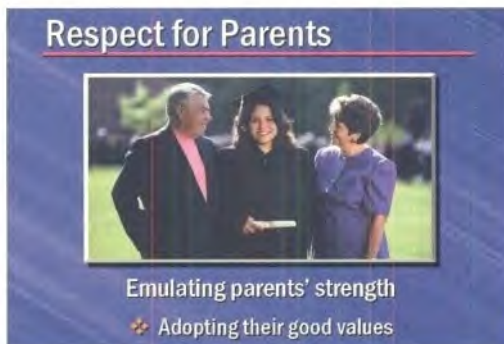
As human beings, our challenge is to grow and mature, both spiritually and physically. We mature internally as our heart, guided by our conscience, seeks truth, beauty and goodness for the joy of others as well as our own fulfillment. A man and a woman who have cultivated truth, beauty and goodness in preparation for marriage offer these fruits as their wedding gifts to each other.

Marriage is a reciprocal relationship, shaped through the

process of giving and receiving. If husband and wife focus only on each other, hoping that their partner will make up for their own inadequacies, they risk losing their identity and fusing into each other. On the other hand, if they devote all their energies to independent pursuits, they may become distant from each other. In a healthy marriage, there is a good balance between the spouses' ongoing pursuit of maturity as individuals and their interdependence as a couple.

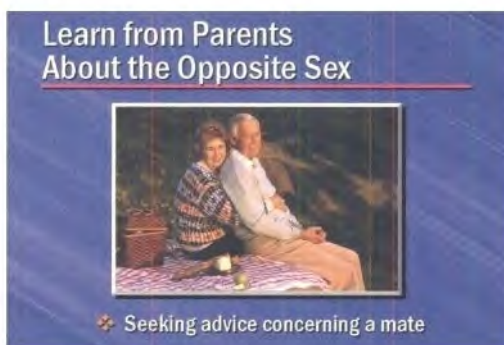
## B. Bonding with Parents

Young people's readiness for marriage is shaped by their relationship with their parents. The family school of love is meant to prepare people for a love that is unique, unchanging and unconditional with their life partner. Ideally, parents give their children a clear sense of their destiny in life, teaching their sons that they are born to experience the joy of marriage to a woman and their daughters that they are born to experience the joy of marriage to a man.



Adolescents are very perceptive of their parents' shortcomings. They can be encouraged to take note of their parents' admirable traits and values and seek to internalize them. It is good for parents to inspire respect and moral veneration in their children, as long as their influence remains warm and human. Wise parents cultivate core values in their children, with the hope that their children will adopt them and even improve on them. For example, immigrant parents may work hard at menial jobs in order to give their children opportunities they did not have. Their children often become successful and praise the sacrificial love of their parents.

Adults who have learned from experience have the objectivity and the lucidity lacking in most young people. They have learned, for example, the benefits of doing things out of duty even when they do not feel like it. Many cultures emphasize filial piety, which is the ideal response of respect and devotion that children offer to their parents' love. Children can inherit the wisdom of their parents and benefit from their protection and guidance.



Children learn from their parents how to relate to people of the opposite sex. This education is confirmed when girls want to marry a man like their father or boys want to marry a woman like their mother. Having given birth to their children, parents are responsible to love them and give them guidance about sexual boundaries, marriage and parenting. An important aspect of respect for parents is seeking their advice concerning a spouse. The parents' responsibility culminates when their children become parents themselves.



## Parents Set the Examples of Love

**C**hildhood is a time for intense cooperation between the flow of parental love to the child and filial love to the parents. Maternal love is comparable to water and soil, providing minerals and pushing up from beneath, whereas paternal love is like sunshine, drawing the mind and spirit upward. Nurtured by such love, the child's true self can emerge, like branches and flowers developing from a straight trunk and firm roots. The roots and trunk help establish self-discipline to uphold these values in all circumstances.

Young people tend to be a little blind when it comes to love. Parents, grandparents and educators can share insights about love that they gained over the years.

Adolescents go through phases of infatuation. They sometimes feel that they are the princes and princesses of the world, as they taste the glorious royalty of love. Parents and educators can cherish and nurture this youthful enthusiasm, while at the same time channeling their self-centered focus to a more altruistic love.

True love recognizes other people's shortcomings, has compassion on them and looks for ways to raise them up. Emotional storms often characterize the process of growth. It is good for parents to guide their children's passions, whether it is for toys, model cars, ideas or friends. Wise parents welcome the opportunity for emotional closeness that these passions represent, while at the

same time warning their children against focusing on the object of their passion to the exclusion of all else. Parents who cannot say "no" to their children create the potential for addictions. On the other hand, children who receive no affirmation from their parents will set off in a desperate search for it elsewhere.


The way the father treats his daughter and his wife sets the standards of respect and care that the girl will demand of boys. The girl learns from her mother how to treat males, and the boy learns from his father how to treat females. Girls who are starved for their father's attention and boys who crave a mother's comfort are vulnerable to manipulation and abuse by people of the opposite sex.

### C. Commitment to Purity

A key personal resource is the ability to delay gratification for the sake of long-term goals—in this case, a happy, lasting marriage. The emphasis on abstinence until marriage means more than refraining from a premature expression of love. Abstinence until marriage creates a protective realm while young people prepare to achieve the life goal of building a loving family. It shields them against physical, mental and emotional harm and provides a context for developing healthy relationships. More profoundly, the commitment to pure love enables people to experience a uniquely human dominion over their impulses.

Parents and educators can set standards for good taste in clothing, language and entertainment. They can also help organize wholesome activities for adolescents. While adolescents are often idealistic, passionate and sensitive to others, it is also their nature to take risks, pursue the

**Value of Abstinence**



- ✦ Supports personal development
- ✦ Protects against physical, mental and relational risks
- ✦ Context for healthy friendships

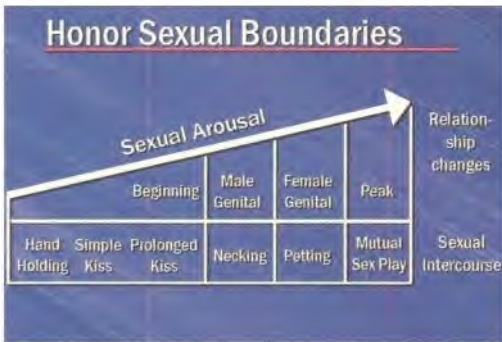
excitement of the moment, and assume that they are invulnerable to negative consequences. Alcohol and drugs can alter people's perspective and reduce their inhibitions. With the advantages of personal experience and opportunities to observe others, adults can advise adolescents about avoiding situations that they will later regret.

Adolescents need to know that people experience the maximum fulfillment of sexual desire when they exercise moral responsibility. This means setting and honoring boundaries about expressing affection before marriage.

Sexual arousal is normal and healthy, but controlling it and deciding when and where to use it are the marks of a morally mature person. Psychiatrist Viktor Frankl observed that all sexual activity outside of mature monogamy is inherently self-centered.<sup>5</sup> Initiation into sex before the appropriate time and context reinforces the self-centeredness of young people and distorts their development. Within the intimacy and commitment of marriage, husband and wife can experience the ultimate mutual fulfillment that comes from freely giving of oneself to one's beloved.

Young people are better able to maintain a commitment to purity when they have clear goals in life. This helps them maintain strong bonds with their parents and other positive role models, cultivate many good friendships, develop their talents and interests, and avoid abusing alcohol and drugs.

Popular culture, and especially the entertainment industry, promotes the image of casual, recreational sex. Once teens understand how sexual allure is used to promote and sell products, they are less influenced by it. They can see how their deepest longings and fears about love and maturity are being manipulated to make money for people who care nothing about them. Young people should know that the contrived images of love and romance conveniently omit the often unpleasant consequences of uncommitted sex in real life. Lacking a sense of social responsibility, the news and entertainment industries generally operate on the presumptions of value neutrality; they are not committed to helping people realize the fundamental life goals of developing a mature character, establishing loving relationships and family, and making a contribution to society.



The most important factor protecting teens against early sexual activity is a pledge of abstinence. This pledge can be symbolized by a ring. In a sense, this is practice for keeping their wedding vows.

**Make the Commitment  
to Abstinence**



# PART 3: Gaining Insight

## A. About Building Relationships



As explained in the presentation on the Family as the School of Love, our lifetime calling is to grow through the four realms of heart (children's love, sibling's love, spouse's love, and parent's love). Wise people recognize the importance of drawing upon the accumulated resources of the family to grow in the realms of heart.

An important preparation for married life is learning how to relate harmoniously with people of diverse ages, personalities and backgrounds. Relationships with friends, teachers, schoolmates, neighbors, employers and co-workers provide a wealth of experiences to draw upon when meeting similar types of people in the future.

Young people who fail to develop healthy relationships with their parents, elders and peers enter adulthood stunted internally. They lack empathy, self-control and altruism. They may implode or explode, causing harm to themselves or others as the complexities of life bear down on them. They are ill-prepared to move on to the realms of conjugal and parental love. Recent developments in marriage preparation programs recognize that people often have unmet needs from earlier phases of life. This demonstrates a growing recognition that healthy marriages are founded on success in the earlier realms of heart.

Friendships among peers are one of the best preparations for future success in marriage. This is far better preparation than the artificiality of dating—when young people put on their best appearances and pursue fun as a couple, in isolation from their families and peers. Adolescence is the time for developing the capacity for reciprocal love without sexualizing the relationship. The trustworthiness, support, loyalty and cooperation learned through friendships are excellent foundations for building a healthy marriage.

All people, whether they are shy or outgoing, build their character and find their destiny through orderly interactions with other people. There is always an interaction between the first life goal—developing a mature character—and the



second life goal—forming loving relationships and a family. It is very rewarding to find a projection of one's own character and destiny in the larger social sphere. People grow in character and expand the scope of their love as they live for the benefit of their family, their community, their nation and the world.

Peers are important sources of insight, challenge and validation. Peer groups are especially significant during adolescence. Boys who are going through similar experiences provide support for each other; the same applies to girls. In general, males tend to bond by doing activities together, and females tend to bond by talking things over. The validation and companionship that come from same-sex colleagues lightens the burden on a fiancé or spouse to provide validation. Good marriage candidates know how to work with colleagues of the same gender and gain their respect. Poor marriage prospects go to the opposite gender for the companionship and validation they cannot get from their peers of the same gender.

Until early adolescence, boys naturally tend to play with boys and girls play with girls. Around puberty, interest grows in the opposite sex. Cultivating good relationships with friends, siblings and cousins of the opposite gender is good preparation for the lifelong relationship of marriage. Adolescents are drawn to people of the opposite gender, both for companionship and insight about the dynamics of relationships between adult men and women. Enduring marriages are generally characterized by deep friendship and companionship. The insights that enable girls to understand boys and boys to understand girls are best gained in relationships free of romantic overtones. Premature sexual involvement short-circuits the process of learning mutual respect and appreciation.

## B. About Love

Lasting love is an art to be learned, requiring a range of virtues, insights and skills.

Love is an emotional attraction between a subject partner and an object partner. Guided by ethical norms, give and take between subject and object partners leads to unity, fulfillment and development.

### Same Gender Friends



### Opposite Gender Friends



✦ Relating with modesty and respect

### Lasting Love - Art to Be Learned



Requires virtues, insights and skills

### Knowledge



✦ Insight into love  
✦ Information about marriage

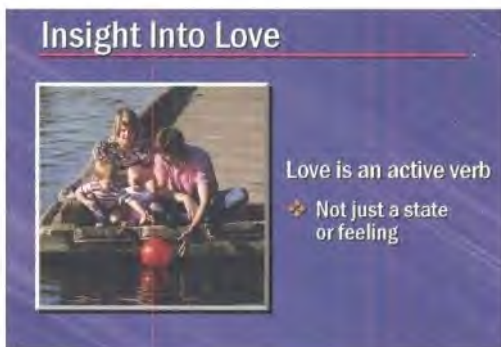


At the core of human beings is heart. Deeper than emotion, intellect or will, heart is the impulse to love and to be united in love with the object of love. Heart inspires two types of desires: (1) to seek value for our own happiness, and (2) to manifest value for the joy of others. Motivated by true love, people cultivate beauty, truth and goodness for the joy of others, and they delight in perceiving beauty, truth and goodness in their beloved.

Love has a creative power. Love cultivates value or enhances the latent potential for value within the beloved. For instance, the loving spouse will invest efforts to make his or her spouse better looking, better educated, more altruistic or more socially involved. The place to nurture and educate such a heart is in the family school of love. We can acquire and control money, power and knowledge, but love is beyond human control. We need maturity of character and heart to channel the power of love and protect us from being disintegrated by it.

Love reveals a person's inner nature. Subject and object partners are able to interact because their natures are complementary. Thus, lovers see an unfolding reflection of themselves in each other. Our deepest joy comes from discovering someone who resembles our inner ideal.

Love is connected to destiny. People in love exist for a person who in turn exists for them. Through the awakening of love, a woman's femininity becomes the object of a man's love, while the man's masculinity becomes the object of a woman's love. The decisions people make about expressing this love affect their course of life.



True love is altruistic. It motivates us to sacrifice for others. It is human nature to desire genuine, unchanging and unconditional love. Love is not just a feeling; it is a decision. It is not whom one loves that counts, but rather how one loves. "Love is an active ... verb," according to marriage counselor Frank Pittman. "It is something married grownups do no matter how they feel."<sup>6</sup> Thus, true love is centered not on our own feelings but on the welfare of our beloved. Emotionally, true love inspires empathy for our beloved. Intellectually, it is a quest to know everything about our beloved. As an expression of will, it means a commitment to act for the happiness and welfare of our beloved, even at the risk of our own life.

## How Does Our Love Measure up?

**P**itrim Sorokin categorizes love according to its intensity, duration, extent, purity and adequacy.\* Honest reflection upon these questions can help us improve the quality of our love:

**Intensity:** Am I able to give everything for the sake of my beloved, even at the risk of my life? This is the highest standard of intensity in love.

**Duration:** Am I committed to the relationship for the long term? Most people do not want a love that lasts only for a day, a month or a year.

**Extent:** How wide is my love? The broadest scope of love embraces family, clan, nation and world.

**Purity:** Do I love my beloved for who he or she is? Love that uses

someone as means for achieving another goal is not pure love.

**Adequacy:** Are the results of my love consistent with the goal of love, which is to bring lasting happiness to the other person? When love produces harmful results, it is inadequate love.

Pitrim Sorokin (ed.), *Explorations in Altruistic Love and Behavior* (Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1950).

True love is unchanging. It has an internal focus and does not vary depending on our mood or diminish when our beloved is absent. It is unconditional, not depending on the other person's actions. When a child misbehaves, the parent does not withdraw his or her love. True love is capable of forgiving the shortcomings of others. True love recognizes the uniqueness of the beloved and does not try to fit him or her into a mold. In true love, husband and wife respect each other's personality and character and want to help each other grow. Such experiences of true love produce lasting joy and fulfillment.

One of the most fundamental insights is learning to discern true love from infatuation, crushes and unhealthy attachments. Infatuation has an external focus and diminishes with separation. It is changeable, conditional and short-lived. Some people fall in love with the feeling of being in love, and do not care who the object of the moment is. Although it may be an exciting catalyst for a lasting relationship, infatuation is inadequate for sustaining a relationship.

In a way, infatuated people are in love with themselves, and they project part of themselves into another person. They fall in love with their projection and do not see the other person for who he or she is. Thus, vanity and illusion are at the core of infatuation. When the beloved is revealed as being different from the imagined ideal, disappointments and quarrels follow.



Some people search for love, hoping that it will compensate for their incompleteness. They focus on taking love rather than giving it. Some are not prepared to give love, and others give love in a way that crushes the receiver.

The powerful emotions of falling in love are often "sexual love mingled with psychological drives," according to psychologist M. Scott Peck.' A relationship driven by premature sexual desire can become possessive and manipulative. For such a person to say, "I love you," really means, "I want you for myself."

There is a simple way to identify true love. It is a willingness to sacrifice oneself for the benefit of others. In contrast, self-centered love sacrifices others for the benefit of one's self.

## The Appeal of Romantic Love

**R**omantic love is often pictured as an escape from the mundane life. Romantic love has its roots in the Romantic movement, which blossomed in 19th-century Europe as a sort of secularized mysticism.

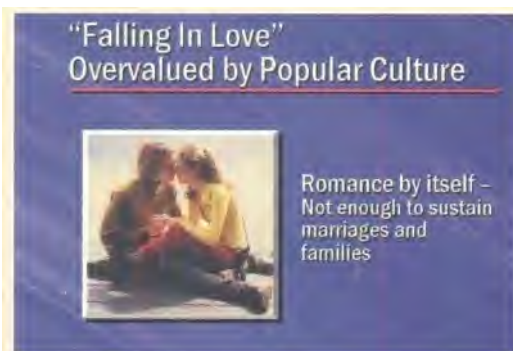
Madame de Stael, one of the theoreticians of French Romanticism, considered romantic love to be a

way to achieve the kind of ideals that people traditionally sought through religion. The Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard said that the passionate life consisted of living the present in anticipation of eternity; the experience of passion allows finite lovers to taste the infinite. According to Romanticism, the infinite needs to be incarnated and revealed in two finite beings who give it verbal expression.

The object of Romantic love portrayed in music, literature and art is often inaccessible. The beloved may belong to the enemy clan (as in "Romeo and Juliet" and "West Side Story"), be

already married (as in "Bridges of Madison County"), have a sickness (as in "Love Story") or perish in a tragic accident (as in "Titanic"). In these bittersweet Romantic tales, there are external obstacles to the fulfillment of love, but the real barriers are internal and reside in the character of the lovers.

The appeal of Romanticism is the escape from the mundane and the pursuit of the ecstasy of losing oneself in a relationship of love. However, without grounding in moral and ethical principles, romantic impulses become decadent rather than blossoming into true love.



## C. About Marriage

Marriage locates people in the web of life that transforms ephemeral passion into lasting commitment that leaves a legacy perpetuated through their descendants. In preparing young couples for the commitment of marriage, Dr. Moon, the founder of IEF, affirms, "Marriage is important because it is the road to finding love. It is the road to creating life. It is the road where the life of a man and a woman unite into one. It is the place where a man's lineage combines with a woman's lineage. History emerges through marriage, and from marriage nations appear and an ideal world begins."

More or less consciously, people consider marriage to be part of the process of realizing their full humanity. However, prospective marriage partners need to anticipate the challenges and rewards that go together with marriage. When we are equipped with a vision for the potential of marriage and prepared to confront our own limitations, marriage offers unique opportunities to develop our heart and character.

American educators Les and Leslie Parrott have pioneered new approaches to helping young people understand the potential of marriage. They found that most people get married for a number of complex reasons. Some of these reasons contribute to a healthy marriage, while others work against it.

Poor motivators include rebellion, escape, loneliness, obligation and sex. The Parrotts advise such people to postpone marrying until they can consider more deeply their motives for marrying. Healthier motives for marriage are grounded in internal qualities of good character, core beliefs, moral values and the ability to love.

One system of defining relationships uses three components: commitment, intimacy and passion. <sup>s</sup> An additional important factor is compatibility. These categories help young people understand how feelings, decisions and common values form the basis for lasting love. Many kinds of good relationships are based on compatibility, commitment and intimacy; passion belongs uniquely to the realm of marriage.

### Value of Information About Marriage



- ❖ Comprehend marriage commitment
- ❖ Anticipate challenges and rewards

### Recognize Components of Relationships

- ❖ Compatibility
- ❖ Commitment
- ❖ Intimacy
- ❖ Passion



Compatibility is what people have in common—interests, background, values and ideals. This is the foundation for the other components.

Commitment is the mortar that holds a relationship together. Research shows that without a determination to keep the marriage alive, husband and wife are unable to digest life's challenges. A definite, total, unreserved and unchangeable commitment sustains marriage as feelings of passion and intimacy come and go. Young people can increase their capacity for keeping commitments by making promises and remaining loyal even when they do not feel motivated.

Intimacy is the emotional component—the sense of closeness and connectedness among people. Intimacy tends to fluctuate. Young people who learn how to foster intimacy with family and friends are building a valuable skill for success in marriage.

Passion is the motivational component of romance and marriage. It involves not only sexual desire but also a longing for an exclusive relationship. Passion fluctuates greatly. Young people can be taught that passion is best experienced in the context of both intimacy and commitment, as in marriage.



American author Henry Ward Beecher remarked, "Young love is a flame; very pretty, very hot and fierce, but still only light and flickering. The love of the older and disciplined heart is as coals, deep-burning and unquenchable." Married couples go through several predictable phases until they reach that deep-burning goal. When young people understand this in advance, they will anticipate the seasons of love and not be shaken by the changing phases.

Romance and infatuation are the initial phase—the sweet illusion of blissful oneness. Such feelings are a temporary foretaste of the deep bonds the couple will experience as the fruit of years of investment in unselfish loving.

Conflicts inevitably arise. Power struggles can be triggered by irritating differences and signs of immaturity. Initially husband and wife may try to manipulate each other to get the love they want. Disappointment and anxiety are common results. Such occasions offer invaluable opportunities to grow in character and heart.

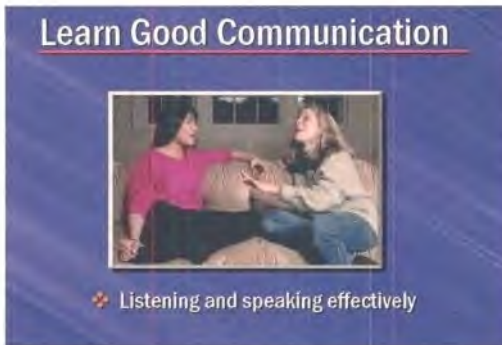
Immature responses include resignation to an unsatisfying marriage, looking elsewhere for satisfaction, or separation.

Recommitment and cooperation. Wise couples make personal sacrifices for the sake of the marriage. They look within themselves and take responsibility for their own limitations.

Creativity and service typify the ultimate stage of marriage. As love fills their union and overflows, husband and wife are moved to reach out to share their love with the world around them.

## PART 4: Learning **Skills**

### A. Communication



Family therapist Virginia Satir remarked, "Communication is to a relationship what breathing is to maintaining life." The skills of good communication involve three processes: expressing ourselves, listening to others and responding to them. Warmth, sincerity and empathy are the best lubricants for good communication. Knowing how to say the right thing at the right time is important; more challenging is resisting the urge to say the wrong thing at a tempting moment. It requires special care to express negative feelings in a way that other people can accept without becoming defensive.

Marriage requires cooperation and mutual understanding in every area, from routine chores to handling finances and raising children. Marriage preparation courses emphasize communication. One structured communication exercise involves students in role plays taking turns speaking, listening and responding. This helps slow down the interaction so that both sides can be heard and understood. This format also helps restore broken connections between people. In simple terms, the format is as follows:

One person, the speaker, expresses himself or herself thoroughly and without interruption. (A timer can be set for 10 minutes, for example.)

The listener devotes full attention to understanding what is being communicated.

The speaker pauses periodically so the listener can repeat or paraphrase back what was heard.

The speaker clarifies any inaccuracies in the feedback and invites the listener to respond.

The roles reverse and the listener becomes the speaker.

The process continues until both people feel fully understood.

Marriage educator Lori Gordon developed a pattern for 10 to 20 minutes of daily communication that helps build intimacy in relationships. Adolescents who practice the

following stages at home and among friends are well prepared to build intimacy with their future spouse:

Express appreciation. People begin by paying compliments and expressing gratitude.

Share information. Keep each other up to date about changes and developments in your lives.

Seek help with puzzles. Ask for clarification about any uncertainties in the relationship or discuss decisions that need to be made.

Offer complaints with requests for change. Bring up problems in a constructive way with suggestions for ways the other person can help meet your needs and avoid hurting you.

Share wishes, hopes and dreams. Build a sense of a shared future.

## B. Conflict Resolution

Conflicts between husband and wife are inevitable, and how we deal with them can make a life-or-death difference in a relationship. Adolescence is a good time to start developing the skills to handle conflicts.

Psychologist Carl Jung noted, "Conflict creates the fire of ... emotions; and like every fire it has two aspects; that of burning and that of giving light." Thus, people can learn to appreciate conflict, because it offers opportunities for them to understand themselves better and become closer to their spouse. The first step in conflict resolution is for each person to describe the issue, discussing it until everyone agrees on a definition. Conflicts often have their roots in misunderstanding, and clarifying everyone's perspective on the issue may bring resolution.

It is important to learn how to fight fairly, so that conflicts do not poison the relationship. There are four important warnings about handling conflict:

Discuss how the problem behavior affects you, but do not criticize or blame the other person. For example, instead of saying, "You are so lazy?" try saying something like, "I feel very overwhelmed when you don't help me."

### Value of Conflict Resolution Skills



Marriage is stressful  
✦ Destroyed by unresolved conflicts

### Avoid Relationship Poisons

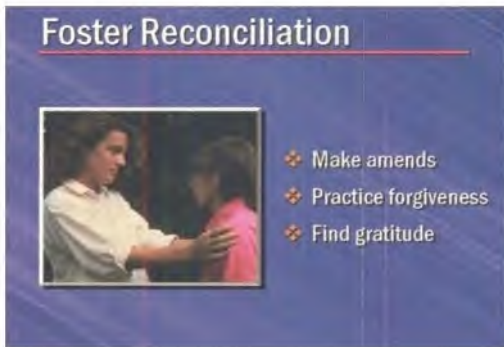
1. Criticism
2. Contempt
3. Defensiveness
4. Stonewalling



Do not mock, insult or abuse the other person.

Do not become defensive, deny responsibility or make excuses for yourself.

Do not put up a stone wall of indifference to protect yourself and avoid a confrontation. This seems aloof, smug and judgmental to the other person. It is better to try to keep communicating and working for improvement, even if the situation is painful.



In all relationships, conflicts arise and are sometimes handled poorly. However, it is dangerous for such reactions to become patterns. Having the humility to recognize one's own shortcomings and contributions to the problem is a sign of wisdom and maturity. This leads to attempts to promote reconciliation:

Make amends for whatever harm you have caused.

Look for the good points in the other person, and be grateful for the other person's virtues.

Recognize that no one is without shortcomings, so forgive the other person, as one human being to another.

In any relationship, kindness and courtesy help keep tensions from arising. For more details, refer to the presentation on the Causes and Resolution of Conflict.

## PART 5. Developing the Heart of Serving Others

The heart of serving others is the hallmark of a mature character. Maturity of character is an extraordinary asset not only for the individual but also for the community and the nation. Wise parents, teachers, clergy, policy makers and social leaders develop programs that strengthen the positive aspirations of youth.

Service projects offer an opportunity to gain new perspectives on people and on life in general. Working in teams helps prepare for the future challenges of marriage and parenting. Through service, people learn that love requires effort, and that through giving we often receive in unexpected and heart-warming ways. To help relieve the suffering of others can counterbalance the tendency of adolescents to become preoccupied with themselves.

Working together on a service project can be a noble higher purpose that can draw two people together. Serving together is a good way to learn to know each other more deeply and build a lasting relationship.

### Service



Broadens the  
experience of  
giving

### Lessons of Service



- ❖ Love requires effort
- ❖ To give is to receive

### Strengthen Relationships through Service



- ❖ Value of higher purpose

## PART 6: Finding and Courting a Mate

### A. External Qualities

People generally employ strategies to accomplish important goals. Selecting a lifetime partner is one of the most important decisions in life. Young people can be taught which strategies achieve the best outcome. To focus on external traits, such as attractiveness, wealth and status, has proven to be less successful than focusing on more internal traits, such as character, beliefs and the ability to love.

People looking for partners tend to focus first on the physical attractiveness, economic potential or social status of a potential mate. Such qualities may help provide the external foundation for marriage. However, they are changeable and do not by themselves guarantee a satisfying relationship and happy marriage. Therefore, focusing on external attributes is not a very successful strategy for selecting a spouse.

### B. Internal Qualities

There is a much greater likelihood of success in marriage if inner traits are taken into account. Similarity in values, character, beliefs and ability to love are much better predictors of success in marriage. Married couples report that they value the following qualities most highly: caring, honesty, trust, fidelity, commitment, willingness to sacrifice, and sense of humor.

Couples who say they are happy and love each other, according to sociologist Judith Wallerstein, consider their spouse to be noble, moral and genuinely worthy of admiration and love.<sup>9</sup> Such qualities are important underpinnings of the love between husband and wife. A spouse's virtuous character inspires devotion and dedication, which are the foundations for creating oneness in marriage.

One high school marriage-preparation course assigns pairs of classmates to handle as partners a series of realistic situations such as managing money and raising children. This helps students become aware of the virtues and relationship skills that are essential to marriage. These assignments help

### Selecting a Marriage Partner


<p style="text-align: center;">Less Successful – Focus on Outer Traits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Attractiveness</li> <li>❖ Wealth</li> <li>❖ Status</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;">More Successful – Focus on Inner Traits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Character</li> <li>❖ Beliefs</li> <li>❖ Ability to love</li> </ul>
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### Qualities Most Valued by Those Seeking Partners



- ❖ Physical attractiveness
- ❖ Economic potential
- ❖ Status

### Qualities Most Valued by Married Couples



- ❖ Caring
- ❖ Honesty
- ❖ Trust
- ❖ Fidelity
- ❖ Commitment
- ❖ Willingness to sacrifice
- ❖ Sense of humor

them discover that the desirable traits in such a partner have little to do with charm or good looks.<sup>10</sup>

It is natural to wish for our spouse to be better than we are. However, it is unfair to expect our spouse to have virtues that we have not made effort to cultivate in ourselves. Adolescence is an ideal time for people to develop the qualities of character that will prepare them to be a worthy spouse. As the Roman poet Ovid noted, "To be loved, be lovable."

### C. Parental and Community Support

Marriage always occurs in a broader cultural context. Many cultures have traditions regulating contact with the opposite sex. In traditional cultures—and until recently in the West—families play a major role in the selection of their children's mates and preparation for marriage. This assumes a trust and closeness between parents and children. Parental influence on children's choice of marriage partners can result in happy and satisfying relationships. This indicates that the commitment of both parties to the marriage and the support of the extended family and community may be more important than how the spouse is chosen.

There are advantages to having a network of familial and social ties when contemplating marriage. In a deep sense, marriage links people with an entire family and community, not just an individual. Thus, one approach to selecting a mate is to find a community with a good set of values and look for the right person there. Elders who understand people's strengths and weaknesses can give good advice about the choice of a marriage partner.

Within such a community, couples have the best possibilities for building a good marriage and family.

### D. Courtship

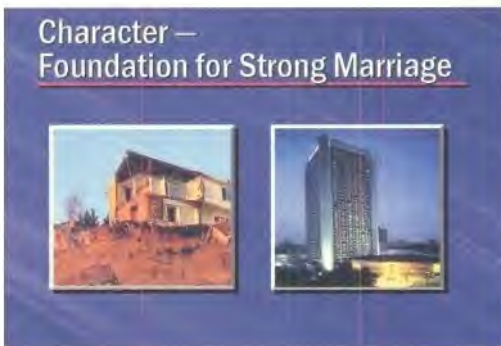
At some point, a romantic interest develops, perhaps from an existing friendship, a chance meeting or an introduction.

Many cultures have beautiful traditions of courtship before marriage. In the United States, there is a renewed interest among young people in choosing a spouse based on their virtues and with the consent of parents. The young people pledge their commitment to each other and begin to build intimacy and romance. Since the spouse will become



part of the larger family, courtship helps establish bonds among the various family members.

Questionnaires have been designed for couples who are planning to marry." The answers of each partner can be compared and points of differences highlighted, suggesting areas to be explored and strengthened. The questions explore personality characteristics, values, support from family and friends, communication and conflict resolution skills, and family background.



Our whole life is a process of character formation, and we bring to our relationship the fruit of our entire life experiences up until that time. Marriage preparation helps couples realize the strengths and weaknesses that each brings to their relationship. It helps them reflect about childhood experiences that shape their expectations for marriage, love and sexuality. In the process of learning to know each other and making decisions about their future, it is good for prospective partners to discuss their family backgrounds as well as expectations about family size, raising children, handling finances, balancing work and family responsibilities, religious practices and other practical matters. Such knowledge in advance can help prevent much misunderstanding and conflict.

## Building the Foundation for Commitment, Intimacy and Passion

**I**t takes time for intimacy and passion to develop. Shared activities, such as the following, can help young people gain insight into each other's personality and character, explore the potential for marriage, and build a foundation for a healthy marriage:

Have deep conversations.

Go for long walks.

Help take care of younger children.

Spend time with each other's family.

Work on a service project together.

Go for a picnic.

Go out for coffee or for a meal.

Read poetry to each other.

Go on bike rides together.

Help a neighbor.

Visit friends.

Go dancing.

Make gifts for other people.

Visit grandparents.

Attend concerts.

Cook meals together.

Play sports.

Go to a fair.

Help each other study.

Play games.



## Conclusion

More than just teaching knowledge and skills, wise and loving parents, educators and leaders cultivate in young people the capacity for enduring conjugal love and happy families. Just as intellectual abilities and technical skills augment professional success, relational skills and character development can empower young people to create strong and successful marriages. People find personal fulfillment through loving family relationships and contributing to the well-being of their community and nation.

Who will volunteer to help cultivate the ideal of love in the hearts and minds of the young people and help them prepare wisely for marriage, sex and love? Parents, teachers, community leaders and religious leaders can collaborate to promote a marriage culture and help empower new generations in their quest for lasting love.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Harville Hendrix and Helen Hunt, *The Couples Companion: Meditations and Exercises for Getting the Love You Want* (New York: Pocket Books, 1994), p. 123.

<sup>2</sup> See Patrick F. Fagan and Robert Rector, "The Effects of Divorce on Children," Backgrounder 1373, Heritage Foundation, June 5, 2000, and other publications by the Heritage Foundation, including the 2000 draft paper by Patrick F. Fagan, "Increasing Marriage and Decreasing Divorce."

1995 Survey by the Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan.

<sup>3</sup>Judd and Mary Landis, *Building a Successful Marriage* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1958).

Viktor Frankl, *The Unheard Cry for Meaning: Psychotherapy and Humanism* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1978), pp. 79-80.

<sup>4</sup> Frank Pittman, *Grow Up! How Taking Responsibility Can Make You a Happy Adult* (New York: Golden Books, 1998), p. 159.

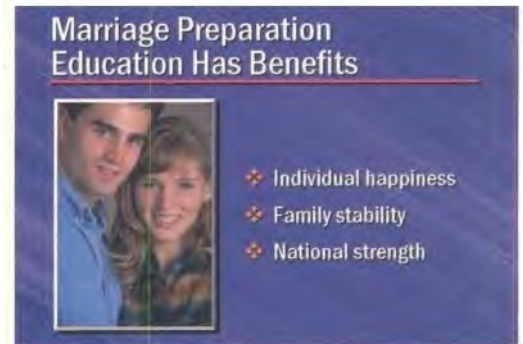
M. Scott Peck, *The Road Less Traveled* (New York: Touchstone, 1978), p. 84.

<sup>5</sup> Les and Leslie Parrott, *Saving Your Marriage before It Starts: Seven Questions to Ask Before (and after) You Marry* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1995), pp. 33-35.

<sup>6</sup> Judith Wallerstein and Sandra Blakeslee, *The Good Marriage* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1995), p. 64.

<sup>7</sup> Charlotte Kamper, *Connections: Relationships and Marriage, Teachers Manual* (Berkeley, California: The Dibble Fund for Marital Enhancement, 1996).

[www.marriageprep.com](http://www.marriageprep.com), [www.focusinc.com](http://www.focusinc.com), [www.lifeinnovations.com](http://www.lifeinnovations.com), [www.relate.byu.edu](http://www.relate.byu.edu) are among the most popular inventories available through the Internet.



## APPENDIX:

# Components of Marriage Preparation Programs

The following are some typical components of marriage preparation programs, grouped under the headings of the three basic life goals. All people have the potential to cultivate their character and build a healthy marriage.

Life goal of personal maturity:

- Assess one's character, recognizing one's strengths and identifying areas for improvement.
- Develop a sense of personal identity and wholeness, being comfortable both with others and alone.
- Learn to identify one's feelings and deal constructively with them.
- Recognize that love is a decision and that one can keep on loving through the ups and downs of emotions.
- Develop the seven qualities that married people prize most in their spouse: caring, honesty, trust, fidelity, commitment, companionship and self-sacrifice for the sake of the marriage.
- Learn from the wisdom of the world's great religious and moral traditions.

Life goal of loving relationships:

- Look for clues about the character of potential marriage partners.
- Fill out questionnaires to gain insight about areas in which the personalities of the couple may be similar, complementary or opposite.
- Learn relationship-building skills.
- Maintain close bonds with one's parents.
- Cultivate ongoing relationships with relatives, teachers, peers and mentors that can be sources of guidance and support throughout adulthood.
- Learn to know the family of a prospective marriage partner for insights into the two heritages to be

joined through marriage.

- Learn communication skills.
- Learn how to resolve conflicts.

Life goal of making a contribution to society:

- Learn a career or trade that will support the family and contribute to society.
- Learn practical skills to manage a household and be helpful to others.
- Learn to balance time, money and resources to meet the needs of the family and fulfill any larger obligations.

For examples of marriage preparation materials, see the following:

- *The Art of Loving Well: A Character Education Curriculum for Today's Teenagers*, by the Loving Well Project (Boston, Massachusetts: Boston University, 1993).
- *Connections: Relationships and Marriage*, by Charlene Kamper (Berkeley, California: The Dibble Fund for Marital Enhancement, 1996).
- *PAIRS for PEERS: Practical Exercises Enhancing Relationship Skills*, by Lori Gordon and Morris Gordon (Fort Lauderdale, Florida: PAIRS Foundation, 1997).
- *Partners for Students: Teaching Teenagers the Relationship Skills That Maintain Marriage* (The American Bar Association, 1999).
- *Permanent Love: Practical Steps to a Lasting Relationship*, by Edward G. Ford and Steven L. Englund (Scottsdale, Arizona: Brandt Publishing, 1980).
- *Relationships Workbook: An Open and Honest Guide to Making Bad Relationships Better and Good Relationships Great*, by Les Parrott (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1998).



*Searching for Life's True Purpose*

PERSPECTIVES ON MORALITY AND ETHICS

# Promoting a Marriage Culture



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# Introduction

Moral and ethical standards, as well as economic, social and political institutions, traditionally supported stable marriages, creating what is sometimes referred to as a marriage culture. Extended families are the norm in traditional societies, encompassing individuals in a web of vertical and horizontal family bonds. Nuclear families, based solely on the marriage bond, are a relatively recent trend.

Modern thinking has shifted its focus from a culture of duties to a culture of rights. In the West, the Age of Enlightenment launched a new social order based on individual rights, personal choice, egalitarian relationships and secularism. These revolutionary concepts led people to consider the marriage bond to be a voluntary contract that could be broken. The social changes that accompany industrial and technological modernization have created an upheaval in the cultural values that formerly supported marriage. With the counter-culture revolution of the 1960s, the communal and sacred dimensions of marriage have been fading away, leaving merely a personal dimension.

Popular culture reflects this confusion in values. Contemporary music, movies, and literature elevate the individual over the family and promote self-gratification at the expense of social good. Instead of a culture emphasizing responsibility, we find a culture that focuses on rights. There is less emphasis on honoring the marriage vows and the nobility of serving one's spouse and children. Not only has divorce lost its stigma, but economic, social and legal policies sometimes penalize couples who marry. These factors have contributed to what some people call a divorce culture.

After examining the trends of divorce, single parenting and cohabitation, we will offer an enhanced understanding of the potential of marriage and the significance of conjugal love. Finally, we will introduce several of IEF's initiatives for strengthening marriage. The Appendix outlines some public policy initiatives that can support marriage in substantial ways.

## PART 1: Marriage under Siege

Around the world, marriage bonds are becoming less enduring. Polls show that young people continue to aspire to marriage; however, there has been a general devaluation of the significance of marriage and its necessary connection with love, sex and childbearing. Marriages are less enduring when the larger culture no longer considers them worthy of special status, protection and authority.

Researchers in the U.S. have observed that marriage has dwindled to a "couple's relationship, mainly designed for the sexual and emotional gratification of each adult." Americans have become less likely to marry, those who do marry have less happy marriages, and marriages are more likely to break up. The fragments of the marriage culture include divorce, single-parent households and cohabiting relationships. Those who suffer most from these trends are the children.

### A. Divorce Culture

Perhaps the most obvious signs of the decline of the institution of marriage are the rising divorce rates. A family historian has noted: "The scale of marital breakdown in the West since 1960 has no historical precedent that I know of and seems unique. There has been nothing like it for the last 2,000 years, and probably longer."<sup>2</sup>

Divorce rates rose 200 percent in the United States between 1960 and 1998<sup>3</sup>; an estimated 40 to 50 percent of all first marriages will fall apart.<sup>4</sup> Similar rates are found in parts of Europe. In Japan, an estimated one in three marriages will end in divorce.<sup>5</sup> In China, the divorce rate is 18 percent. This may seem small by Western standards, but it causes great concern in the most populated nation of the world, where divorce rates rose 130 percent between 1985 and 1992.<sup>6</sup>

### Marriage & Family Besieged



### Rise In Divorce

✦ Up over 200% in  
U.S. 1960-1998

Annual number of divorces  
per 1,000 married females  
over age 15

✦ Up 130% in China  
1985 - 1992

Sources: Statistics Abstract of the United States, 1998;  
Statistics Bureau, Chinese Ministry of Civil Affairs



## Recent Trends in Divorce Rates

	1970	1980	1990	1995
Belgium	9.6	20.8	31.9	58.1
Denmark	25.1	39.3	42.8	40.9
France	12	22.3	32.1	38.7
Germany	16.5	27.4	26.4	33
Italy	5	3.2	8	8
Netherlands	11	25.7	29.1	37
Spain	-	-	8	12
Sweden	23.4	42.2	44.1	53.9
United Kingdom	16.2	39.3	42.5	46
United States*	32.8	49.1	47.9	50

Source: Eurostat and \*US statistics. *Le Figaro Magazine*, June 5, 1999, p. 444.

The changes in the United States began with the adoption of "no-fault" divorce laws in 1969, which made divorce much easier to obtain. This revision effectively altered the vows of marriage from a solemn commitment into a contract of convenience, eroding the institution of marriage. It was hoped that opening up access to divorce would allow unhappy couples to dissolve their union, and the remaining marriages would be happier. However, when divorce is more readily available and acceptable, there is less incentive for husband and wife to persevere through difficult times and work to strengthen their marriage.

Research shows that "the belief that an unrewarding marriage should be jettisoned may lead some people to invest less time in their marriage and make fewer attempts to resolve marital disagreements.... By adopting attitudes that provide greater freedom to leave unsatisfying marriages, people may be increasing the likelihood that their marriages will become unsatisfying in the long run."

It seems that divorce has become the spirit of the times. Public concern in the West focuses less on marriage management and achieving success in love than on divorce management, or coping with failed love. Integrated into people's minds and consciences is the concept that the relationship between a man and a woman is fragile. Some families have experienced three generations of divorce, and others have seen the marriages of all the brothers, sisters and cousins collapse. In planning their life course, people used to

set their sights on marriage as the way to achieve lasting love and happiness. With divorce looming on the horizon, people lower their sights, try to deaden their sensitivity to pain, and seek other routes towards satisfaction.

While divorce is sometimes warranted, many break-ups are impulsive decisions that people later regret. In an American poll, 66 percent of divorced respondents said they wished that they and their ex-spouse had tried harder to work things out.<sup>8</sup>

## Effects of Divorce on Children

The sequence of changes initiated by divorce are complex. Divorced mothers and their children often have access to less income, and to save money the parent who has custody may move to cheaper housing. The uprooted children have to adjust to different neighborhoods and new schools. As the years go by, fathers typically have less contact with their children and provide less financial support. Children may have to cope with their mother's new love interests, live-in boyfriends, stepfathers, stepbrothers and stepsisters. Remarriages are more likely than first marriages to result in divorce,

with new losses, more moves and more changes in household configurations.

When divorce was made easier to obtain, it was thought that dissolving an unhappy marriage would be beneficial for the children. American sociologist Judith Wallerstein is widely credited for exposing the false promises of divorce. Originally a supporter of policies that made it easy to dissolve a marriage, she was shocked at what she learned when she interviewed children ten or more years after their parents' divorce. Her research shows that divorce has stunningly bad long-term effects on children. Their parents' divorces were the greatest source of pain, disillusionment and identity problems.

Experiencing their parents' divorce tainted the children's own relationships and eventual marriages. No one was left unaffected. Half of the children developed serious alcohol or drug dependencies, some before the age

of 14. Children were worried that their relationships would fail; they feared abandonment and hesitated to have children themselves. Suicide rates for children of divorce are significantly higher than for children from intact families.\*

In the mid 1990s things began to change in the United States. Researchers began to warn of the ill effects of divorce on children. In 1996 the U.S. Congress passed landmark welfare reform legislation. Between 1997 and 1999, the proportion of children living with their own married parents rose a notch, from 60.26 to 60.74 percent. The difference is small, but for the first time in two generations, the trend of family disintegration stopped getting worse.\*\*

\* Judith S. Wallerstein and Sandra Blakeslee, *Second Chances: Men, Women, and Children a Decade after Divorce* (Boston, Massachusetts: Ticknor & Fields, 1989).

\*\* U.S. Census Bureau, "Families, by Presence of Own Children Under 18: 1950 to Present," Internet Table FM-1 (Internet Release date: June 29, 2001). Reports by David Blankenhorn, "Is the Family Structure Revolution Over?" *American Values Reporter* No. 10, October 2001.

### Children of Divorced or Single Parents at Risk



- ✦ Emotional problems
- ✦ Delinquency
- ✦ Dropping out of school
- ✦ Abuse of sex and drugs
- ✦ Poverty

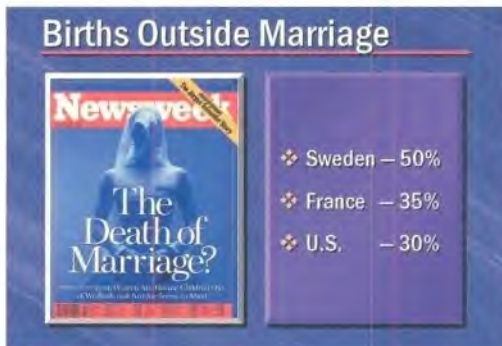


## B. Single-Parent Culture



Marriage rates have been declining in the United States. Only 56 percent of adults are currently married, a decrease of 40 percent since 1960.<sup>9</sup> Marriage is no longer considered essential to parenthood. In the course of a decade, the number of Americans marrying decreased by 6 percent and births outside of marriage increased more than 400 percent.<sup>10</sup> Increasing numbers of children are growing up deprived of the committed love, nurturing, guidance, teaching, protection and role models of both their father and mother.

In many modern societies, a focus on the rights of individuals has diverted attention from the pivotal role that traditional two-parent families play in maintaining social order. With the disruption of time-honored patterns of family life, more children are being raised by single parents.



To bear children outside of marriage is no longer stigmatized in many Western countries. Out-of-wedlock birthrates range from 30 percent in the United States to 50 percent in Sweden." Social welfare programs have been taking over the father's role of financially supporting the mother and children. In some American neighborhoods, teen boys gain status by getting their girlfriends pregnant.

## Some Reasons for Declining Marriage Rates

**A** combination of factors have contributed to the erosion of marriage:

- The decline in moral and spiritual authority. Marriage used to be considered a central part of a person's destiny. People sensed that they were born to marry. This horizon has disappeared. As a rite of passage, marriage has been losing its social importance and ritual significance. The feminist movement has belittled women who are devoted to marriage and raising children. When parents do not have a stable

marriage, the children lack a sense of belonging. Intellectual, spiritual and moral confusion result when people lack rootedness in love and lineage.

- Progress in medicine has given women more and more autonomy, through access to birth control and abortion. Women are claiming mastery over life and reproduction.
- Rapid industrialization and urbanization in many parts of the world have weakened traditional bonds and have given women more options in addition to marriage and motherhood.

Whereas poverty may make people inclined to stay together for economic reasons, economic progress may make autonomy seem more attractive.

- Traditional values are being challenged, and virtue is mocked in a culture that boasts of individualism and gratifying physical desires. Industrial societies are plagued by the loss of tradition. People question conventional family roles, and young people seek new avenues for personal fulfillment.

## C. Cohabitation Culture

There is a basic human need for affiliation, and if marriage is discredited, many adults seek some alternative to single living. While cohabitation was illegal in the United States until 1970, today it is fast becoming a popular alternative to marriage. By 1998, the number of unmarried couples living together had climbed to 4.2 million.

To some, cohabitation seems like a good way to gain the benefits of marriage and avoid divorce. It offers time to find out about a future mate without needing legal or religious permission to dissolve the union.

However, marriage and cohabitation are qualitatively different. Cohabiting relationships are less satisfying than marriage relationships.<sup>12</sup> Cohabiting couples are less happy, less faithful to each other, less satisfied with their sexual relationship, and less connected to their parents.<sup>13</sup> Research has shown that domestic violence is much more common among cohabiting partners than among married partners; some researchers estimate the rate to be nine times as great.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, instead of reducing the likelihood of divorce, cohabitation has the opposite effect. Couples who lived together before marriage have a higher divorce rate than couples who did not.<sup>15</sup>

### Rise in Cohabitation

900% increase in America

Year	Number of Couples
1960	0.5 Million
1998	4.2 Million

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Marriage, Divorce, Remarriage, and Cohabitation: Trends, Statistics, and Social Policy," 1995

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### Reasons for Cohabitation

- ❖ Fear of divorce
- ❖ Less commitment
- ❖ "Test-drive" relationship
- ❖ Government incentives

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### Cohabitation Is No Panacea

- ❖ Increased conflict and poorer communication

Source: David G. Myers, "The Psychology of Cohabitation," 1992

- ❖ Greater likelihood of divorce
- ❖ 7 times greater risk of violence to women

Source: National Crime Victimization Survey, U.S. Department of Justice, 1992



## Effects of Cohabitation on Children

One of the most problematic trends is the increasing number of children living in cohabiting arrangements. Such unions put children at risk because of the uncertain future of cohabiting couples. According to one U.S. study, three-quarters of children born to cohabiting parents will see their parents split before they reach the age of 16, in contrast to one-third of children born to married parents.<sup>†</sup>

Because cohabiting partners have an uncertain future, one partner may not want to risk becoming emotionally attached to the other's children. Perhaps as a result of these tenuous emotional bonds, children living with cohabiting couples show poorer emotional

development than children in married, two-parent families.<sup>††</sup> Children are also vulnerable to abuse by their mother's live-in boyfriend.\*

In the 1990s a consensus began to emerge among social scientists that family structure affects the well-being of children. In terms of academic performance, drug abuse, criminality, income as adults or almost any other measure, the children of married biological parents do best. Children of divorced single parents and remarried parents fare worse. Children of women who never married fare the worst of all; this includes children of cohabiting women. Only a sixth of cohabiting relationships last as long as three years. Thus, even if there was a father in the house at

some point, the child learns that he did not care enough to stay.\*\*

<sup>†</sup> Larry Bumpass and Hsien-Hen Lu, "Trends in Cohabitation and Implications for Children's Family Contexts," unpublished manuscript, Madison, WI: Center for Demography, University of Wisconsin. Cited by Popenoe and Whitehead in "Should We Live Together?"

<sup>††</sup> Lingxin Hao, "Family Structure, Parental Input, and Child Development." Paper presented at the meetings of the Population Association of America, Washington, D.C., March 1997. Quoted in Linda J. Waite and Maggie Gallagher, *The Case for Marriage: Why Married People Are Happier, Healthier, and Better off Financially* (New York: Doubleday, 2000), p. 38.

\* Aldine de Gruyter and Leslie Margolin, "Child Abuse by Mothers' Boyfriends: Why the Overrepresentation?" *Child Abuse and Neglect*, Vol. 16 (1992), pp. 541-551.

\*\* Charles Murray, "The Fathers Are Still Missing," *Washington Post*, October 30, 2001.

The 1995 report of the Council on Families in America concluded that the answer to America's rampant social ills is the recreation of a "marriage culture."<sup>16</sup> It is not easy to redirect the patterns of divorce and cohabitation back to a marriage culture. It is hopeful to note that polls show that young people continue to aspire to marriage.<sup>17</sup> A marriage culture based on true love can transcend past contradictions. Lasting marriages are based on values that are higher than the fulfillment of selfish desires. A beginning point is to reaffirm the value of marriage and offer a deeper understanding of the many dimensions of marriage.



## PART 2: The Potential of Marriage

### A. Organizes the Flow of Love

The presentation on the Family as the School of Love shows how family norms guide relationships. Beyond setting rules, norms facilitate the flow of love, first in the family and then in society. Family norms structure the order of love and regulate sexual relationships. The collapse of sexual norms has resulted in promiscuity, homosexuality, incest and sexual abuse of women and children. These are particularly troubling issues in the West today.

One way to represent relations in the family is through a sphere with three different axes. Marriage is a vital axis in the family sphere. The vertical axis represents the sequence of generations: grandparents, parents, children and grandchildren. These are vertical relationships. There are two horizontal axes, one representing relationships among elder and younger siblings, and the other representing the relationship between husband and wife. Marriage is a unique and exclusive relationship, not meant to be shared with anyone else. Relationships on the husband/wife axis are complementary and equal. In the past, women have suffered injustices and even violence as a result of ignorance about the value of the husband/wife relationship. This illustration introduces a corrective for husband/wife relationships in many traditional forms of marriage.

The husband/wife axis is the only proper context for sexual love. When introduced into other relationships, sex releases destructive forces. Social scientists and anthropologists note that incest is a nearly universal taboo. Victims of incest and child sexual abuse testify to the long-term devastating psychological effects, showing that sex outside of its proper axis is destructive. Sexual relations are reserved exclusively for the horizontal axis of two equal counterparts of the opposite sex who are totally committed to one another. Furthermore, their responsibilities are not merely horizontal but extend vertically toward the previous and future generations.

With true love in the center, people in all six positions—parents, children, elder sibling, younger sibling, husband and wife—live for their counterparts. Equality in the family is

#### Natural Family Order Facilitates Love



✦ Guides family harmony

#### Positions in the Family





realized as each person receives the optimal love according to his or her role in the family. The Russian philosopher Vladimir Solovyev observed the vital role that love plays in human life: "Love is important ... because it transfers all of our life interest from the concern about ourselves to the concern about others; it changes the whole center of our personal life."<sup>18</sup> This is the transforming power of true love.

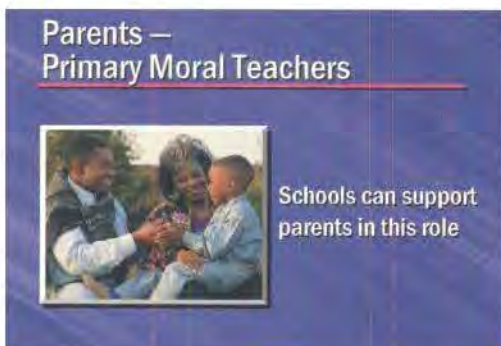
## B. Opens New Realms of Heart

The ability to love and invest in another person with a sacrificial spirit does not arise from a vacuum but from the core of our being, which we call heart. As explained in the presentation on the Family as the School of Love, we grow through four interrelated realms of heart. Marriage is the third realm, building on the experiences in the child's realm of heart and sibling's realm of heart. Children's education in heart is confirmed when they want a wife like their mommy, or a husband like their daddy. Relationships among siblings and peers help prepare for the development of conjugal love. The arrival of a child transforms husband and wife into father and mother; it opens the parent's realm of heart and accelerates the perfection of conjugal love.

One can experience the intersection of all four realms of heart within the marriage relationship and fill in any areas that were not developed in childhood. Sometimes the husband will show a fatherly love to his wife, while at other times he may act as a child to receive her motherly love. Like brother and sister, they may have fun together and support each other. Thus, marriage has the potential to be a psychologically healing and transforming experience.

## C. Confers Moral Authority

Parenthood puts husband and wife in the position of primary moral educators of their children. A child needs both paternal and maternal love for healthy spiritual and mental development. Husband and wife are their children's first teachers in matters of love and relationships. As husband and wife grow in love for each other, their capacity to love their children is enriched. Children learn from their parents what it means to be a man and a woman. Children observe the exchanges of emotions between husband and wife and model their future marriages on what they learned at home from their mother and father.





There are various ways of looking at the psychological differences between men and women. Men express the productive principle, while women exemplify the principle of bearing and nourishing. In general, men are more oriented to the outside world, while women concentrate more on the inner realm. Men seek the new, and women seek to preserve the old. While men may like to roam about, women prefer to make a home. Physically and psychologically, men and women have the potential to complete each other's inner nature and outer structure and to offer an integrated moral example to their children.<sup>19</sup>

### D. Links Past and Future Generations

Through marriage, people establish a new extension of the wondrous continuity that encompasses ancestors and descendants. Each family is a link in the chain of human history. What are families meant to inherit from generation to generation? Wealthy families could give an inheritance of money or property to their descendants. A family proud of its knowledge or social position might be able to pass that on to their children. Yet, we can acquire money, power and knowledge by our own effort. We would not need a family to obtain those things. The only thing that would be hard to inherit without a family is the experience of true love. Without the family experiences of loving and being loved, how can a person reach out to a spouse and create the experiences of trust and intimacy needed for true love? Therefore, the most important legacy husband and wife can give to their children is the experience of true love, the tradition of husband and wife totally committed to each other and living for the sake of each other and their children.

According to clinical psychologist Diane Medved, "Perhaps the most worthwhile purpose of life itself is the creation and nurturing of a family through its complete cycle of development."<sup>20</sup>





## Children's Views about Love

Children ages four through eight were asked what they thought love was. Notice how simply and deeply young people perceive the bond between their parents. One can almost hear the tones of pride in their voices:

"Love is when mommy gives daddy the best piece of chicken."

"Love is when mommy sees daddy smelly and sweaty and still says he is handsomer than Robert Redford."

"When my grandmother got arthritis, she couldn't bend over and paint her toenails anymore. So my grandfather does it for her all the

time, even when his hands got arthritis too. That's love."

"Love is when you kiss all the time. Then when you get tired of kissing, you still want to be together and you talk more. My mommy and daddy are like that. They look gross when they kiss but they look happy and sometimes they dance in the kitchen while kissing."

### E. Confers Nobility

Through marriage, people become part of a grand and magnificent design in life. There is a mystical dimension to our impulse for building a marriage that makes us uniquely human. Around the world, a wedding is considered a sacred event and is marked, like birth and death, with ceremony. The new couple is considered a source of blessing to those around them, and the nobility of their dress and demeanor makes everyone happy and proud to be a human being.

Thus, marriage is love in its royal form. In a sense, one's wedding is the coronation day in the life of a human being. It is the fruition of youth, when the flower blooms fragrant, radiant and pure, ready to bear fruit.

In fact, the Archbishop of Canterbury said at the wedding of Prince Charles and Lady Diana that marriage makes every man a king and every woman a queen. Each father can be said to be the king of his home, with his wife as his queen. Grandparents represent past nobility and children future nobility.

This is not a retreat to a feudalistic or patriarchal concept. The nobility of marriage confers the highest and most precious value to family relationships. Young children look upon their mother as the most beautiful, talented and intelligent woman in the world. They think their father is the strongest, wisest and most capable man in the world. In turn, parents think their children are beautiful, good and valuable beyond measure. The nobility of the family manifests itself in the nobility of love.

### Family as Royalty of Love



- ✦ Father and Grandfather  
— Kings
- ✦ Mother and Grandmother  
— Queens
- ✦ Child  
— Prince and Princess



## Fundamental Attitude of Goodwill

This noble attitude of love imbues a healthy relationship between husband and wife. Studies show that successful couples exhibit a fundamental goodwill toward each other.<sup>†</sup> The beginning point of many problems in marriage is the tendency to disregard our own shortcomings but take offense at the smallest shortcomings of our spouse. When couples practice goodwill toward each other, they notice the positive aspects of their beloved and minimize the less appealing qualities.

In a thriving marriage, the husband and wife possess a fundamental trust and respect for each other. Grateful for their relationship, they treat each other with a spirit of generosity and openness.

Confronted by limitations in love, people may ask, "But what if I'm the only one with goodwill?" "What if I develop it, but I don't feel anything coming in return from my partner?" Goodwill hopefully begets goodwill, but someone has to start the process. The willingness to initiate or take responsibility for

the relationship empowers a person by focusing on what can be done to improve a relationship rather than feeling powerless about what cannot be changed. When one partner begins practicing true love, giving unconditional regard for the sake of the other, it can raise the spirit of the relationship. True love is contagious!

<sup>†</sup> Susan Page, *Eight Essential Traits of Couples Who Thrive* (New York: Broadway Books, 1995); John Gottman, *Why Marriages Succeed or Fail* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994).

## F. Expands the Sphere of Concern

In marriage, the hearts of husband and wife expand as smaller, private concerns give way to greater and more public concerns. Profound lessons are learned when people can delay immediate gratification for the sake of serving others. This results in a deep sense of fulfillment and happiness. People are inspired by the stories of those who at great personal sacrifice invested themselves for the sake of others. Subordinating personal and family well-being for the good of society and the nation has been an important tradition in the East. Heroic stories can help revive this tradition of service.

### Strong Families Have Focus Higher than Self



- ❖ Altruistic purpose
- ❖ Service to community

## Serving the Higher Purpose

### Molly Pitcher

At one time, people in the United States looked up to heroes such as Molly Pitcher. Molly Pitcher's husband, John Hays, was a cannoneer with the First Pennsylvania Artillery during the American Revolutionary War. Molly was a

camp follower, caring for the wounded and bringing water to the thirsty. When her husband was wounded during the Battle of Monmouth in 1778, Molly took his place at the cannon and fought side-by-side with the men. Her determination to continue her hus-

band's role in fighting for their country became legendary, and her bravery may have kept the Americans from losing this battle. For her heroic role, General George Washington appointed her as a noncommissioned officer.



## Serving the Higher Purpose (continued)

### ***Decembrist wives***

In Russian history, the story of the wives of the Decembrists honors the tradition of husband and wife pursuing a purpose higher than their own welfare and happiness. In 1825 Tsar Nicholas I sentenced the Decembrists to Siberia, after their attempt at revolution failed. The Princess Ekaterina Trubetskaya appealed to the government to allow her to join her husband. "I am willing to walk together with common prisoners the 700 kilometers that separate me from my husband," she declared. Leaving behind her grand mansion in St. Petersburg and all her privileges as a noblewoman, she joined the ranks of the lowest class of society and became the first of 11 women to follow their husbands into exile in the Siberian coal mines. Another princess, Maria Volkonskaya, left behind her one-year-old son and noble family to join her husband. At the end of the 40-day journey, she greeted her husband in the coal mine by kneeling down and kissing his chains. During their 30-year exile, those 11 wives selflessly served and inspired their husbands and the other Decembrists whose wives could not follow them. Their sacrifice inspired the men to keep hope and never give up the ideals to which they had dedicated their lives.<sup>†</sup> The beautiful stories of their sacrificial love and the support for their husbands' heroic legacy have been a source of inspiration for the Russian people for generations.

### ***General Yue Fei***

In the Orient there are many stories about the dedication of husband and wife to a higher goal being transmitted to children through filial piety. The story of the Chinese General Yue Fei honors the tradition of the family serving a greater purpose. During the Southern Song Dynasty, he served under a field marshal who was defending the country from enemies to the north. When the field marshal went over to the enemy side, Yue Fei became disgusted and resigned, returning home to care for his mother. His mother, however, was displeased and lectured him about a soldier's first duty being loyalty to his country. She was determined to ensure that her son would uphold the family's tradition of honorable service to the nation. After much consideration, she performed a special ceremony tattooing the words "Utmost Loyalty in Serving the Country" on his back. With this, she felt that her responsibility as a mother was fulfilled. Even though she must have hoped to receive comfort from her son in her old age, she sent him off to serve his country with utmost loyalty. Yue Fei went on to become a great patriot, saving his nation from the Jin invasion. This story illustrates the pivotal role of parents in nurturing conscience and social responsibility in their children.

### ***The Wives of Weinsberg***

There are many legends in the castle towns of Europe about clever wives

rescuing their husbands. In 12th-century Germany, the duke of Bavaria and his people were trapped inside the walls of the castle of Weinsberg. The armies of Swabia had surrounded the castle in a lengthy siege, and the defenders could resist no longer. Messengers carried negotiations for surrender back and forth, and sadly the duke and his officers prepared to give themselves over to their enemy. But the wives of Weinsberg were not ready to give up their families and their city. They sent a message to the enemy asking permission to bring out with them as many of their valuables as they could carry. The request was granted, and soon the castle gates were opened. Out came the ladies, but they were not bearing gold and jewels. Each one was bent over, carrying on her back her husband, whom she hoped to save from the vengeance of the conqueror. The enemy was moved to tears by the extraordinary performance of the wives and assured them of their husbands' safety and freedom. A banquet was held for them and a peace treaty was drawn up that was favorable to the city. The castle mound became known as the Hill of Weibertreu, or women's fidelity.


<sup>†</sup> A. Gessen, *In the Depths of Siberian Ore* (Moscow: Detskaya Literatura, 1969), p. 122.

All nations have such heroes who risked their lives and families for a noble purpose. They are recognized as patriots deserving the nation's honor and respect. Throughout the world, people who invested their lives for the sake of all humankind are recognized as great teachers, sages and saints. They have become the pride of their nation and a treasure for world civilization. As people invest sacrificially with a spirit of genuine goodwill and concern for others in increasingly inclusive spheres that transcend barriers of race, culture and nationality, the foundation for a harmonious and peaceful world can be established.



## PART 3: Dimensions of Conjugal Love

**Uniqueness of Marriage**




- ✦ Joins two lives
  - ✦ Families
  - ✦ Possessions
  - ✦ Destiny
  - ✦ Bodies
- ✦ Sex – Exclusive to the spouse

Conjugal love is singled out for special discussion in order to give it a new perspective and depth. Conjugal love is more than mechanics. Traditionally there has been a deep connection between human sexuality, erotic love, marriage and procreation. Marriage provides the meeting place for many things. In marriage two people join their lives and share a common destiny. They pool their possessions and share their property. Their extended families become merged. The uniqueness of marriage is its potential to allow the most intimate sharing of a man and woman by the giving of sexual love to each other. Everything is shared in mutuality, as couples exercise co-ownership in many areas of their life.

Marriage is where the natural desires for true love and the powerful sex drive are united. Marriage regulates sexual unions and provides for their results—children. Sociologists regard this as the backbone of a civil and prosperous society.<sup>21</sup> This presentation offers a new paradigm for the conjugal relationship.

### A. Profound Unity

**Profound Significance of Marriage**



Conjugal love is the deepest sharing possible between two people. It is more than just friendship and companionship.

There is a mystical dimension to the conjugal union that makes it noble and sacred. “Love is carnal even in the mind, spiritual even in the flesh,” according to Augustine. F.W. Nietzsche wrote, “In true love, it is the soul which wraps up the body.” The central meeting place of soul and body is precisely where love, life and lineage intersect.

In the process of physical maturation, concave and convex take on forms that perfectly correspond to each other. As the manifestation of the masculine and feminine elements of the universe, man and woman are like energy accumulators, each loading either positively charged or negatively charged energy that originated from the depths of the universe and storing it in sexual organs with opposite polarity. There is a cosmic significance to the union of man and woman. Man is the highest expression of yang in the universe; likewise, woman the highest expression of yin. In Oriental philosophy, man represents heaven and woman represents earth. Thus,



their union brings the harmony of heaven and earth. The sexual organs are located near the center of the body, where nerve endings are concentrated. When the spark ignites, energy flows between the positive and negative poles, creating an explosion like a fireball of love. This energy is a tremendously powerful force—perhaps the most powerful human force.

Furthermore, for a man, his wife represents the world of woman—half of humanity. For a woman, her husband represents the world of men—the other half of humanity. Each is the gateway to the other half of the human race, and to explore the mysteries of these complementary essences becomes the adventure of a lifetime. Thus, husband and wife contribute to world harmony through their love. Man and woman each represent half the cosmos, half of humankind, half of the household. But conjugal love is not just representative. It is also profoundly personal. The wife becomes an archetype, but she remains very unique. The same is true for the husband.

## B. The Junction of Love, Life and Lineage

The conjugal relationship is at the heart of the marital union and creates an emotional and psychological link between husband and wife. Love expressed in the sexual relationship gives substance to intimacy and reinforces the marriage bond.

Animals engage in courtship during the mating season, with the goal of reproduction. As human beings, we are not bound by seasons. Our capacity for love transcends the bonds between animal pairs. The love between husband and wife generates both the physical and spiritual force to conceive a new being.

Our sexual organs are the vehicles through which husband and wife join to create new life and extend their lineage. From this point of view they are worthy of honor, protection and preservation for the exclusive use of our spouse, our lifetime partner of love.

### Conjugal Relationship



Emotional  
and  
psychological  
bonding

### Conjugal Relationship



Produces physical  
and spiritual  
force to create a  
new being

### Conjugal Relationship



Continues  
lineage



## C. Impact on Conscience, Spouse and Children



Outside of the bonds of committed love, sex can cause disappointment and regret. Thus, along with our human freedom to enjoy intimacy at all seasons comes the responsibility to make the moral choices that will bring lasting fulfillment. Building an enduring relationship requires the integrity to keep the tides of passion and spontaneity within the channels of fidelity and commitment.

Our first responsibility is to our conscience, which calls us to develop the maturity of heart and character that will enable us to commit ourselves totally to another person. Before marriage, our conscience calls us to resist the desire to engage in premature sexual relationships.



Our second responsibility is towards our spouse. Husband and wife commit themselves to achieve oneness of heart and safeguard that oneness through mutual fidelity. People do not want to share their spouse's love with others, because conjugal love loses its potential for completion the moment it is divided. Fidelity safeguards the couple's unconditional commitment to sharing and honesty; it nurtures the trust and intimacy essential for experiencing fulfillment in marriage.



Our third responsibility is toward our children, the fruit of our sexual union. Entering into a sexual relationship implies a commitment to the potential result: a new person. For nine months the baby is carried and nourished by its mother, as the parents anticipate and prepare for its birth. Parents are morally responsible to nurture the children they create until they reach maturity. Raising children is a momentous challenge. Without the willing and joyous shouldering of this responsibility, parents do their children and their society a grave disservice.

## D. Mutual Fulfillment

As human beings, our instinctual drives are under the control of love and conscience. We are the masters of our own destiny. We are beings of emotion, reason and will. A husband and wife who are too old to bear children can continue to enjoy lovemaking. The degree of fulfillment and satisfaction husband and wife experience is largely due to the

*"Sex is most joyful and fulfilling – most emotionally safe as well as physically safe – within a loving, total and binding commitment... [as in] marriage."*

—John Paul II, *Humanae Vitae*, paragraph 12



emotional bonds between them. Our passion for our partner connects us to a fundamental human need for love and intimacy. In the words of a leader of the character education movement in the United States, "Sex is most joyful and fulfilling — most emotionally safe as well as physically safe — within a loving, total and binding commitment... [as in] marriage."<sup>22</sup>

We also have the profound gift of channeling our drives. While sexual desires are to be celebrated as natural, normal and healthy, to channel them is also natural, normal and healthy. All human desires should harmonize with our spiritual desires for truth, beauty, goodness and love. We need to eat in order to live; however, eating is highly ritualized. We select food and prepare it to please the eye, tantalize the nostrils and stimulate the taste buds, as well as nourish the health of body and soul. We share meals together, in a special setting and observing certain etiquette. Likewise, sexual desires can be channeled and given dignity, resulting in beautiful and meaningful experiences.

Among animals, sex is a physical union motivated by instincts. Human beings are not bound by seasons. In marriage, husband and wife embark on a journey of mutual discovery. In the context of intimacy and trust of marriage, sexuality encompasses the range of physical, emotional, social and moral realms of life.

## E. Mutual Ownership



While men and women have similar organs for all other functions, the male and female sexual organs are different. These concave and convex organs are unique in that they can fulfill their functions only in cooperation with their complement. Thus, it can be said that the wife owns her husband's love organ, and the husband owns his wife's love organ. At their wedding, each gives the other the sole key to the sanctuary of love, life and lineage. For others to trespass on this ownership causes great personal pain and social ruin.

Marriage is the context for total self-giving. People find the greatest fulfillment through the whole-hearted gift of self. Chastity finds its deepest meaning as the protection of the gift of true love. People will not casually toss out to others what

### Sexual Desire & Self-Control

<b>Sexual Desires</b> Normal & healthy	<b>Sexual Activity</b> Controlling it is normal & healthy
---	--


### Human Sexuality Involves Freedom

 <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❖ Physical &amp; Instinctual</li><li>❖ Emotional</li></ul>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❖ Social</li><li>❖ Moral</li><li>❖ Physical &amp; Instinctual</li></ul>
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### Mutual Ownership of Physical Sexuality

One's sexual expression for spouse alone

- ❖ Fulfills its function completely
- ❖ Based on true love



they regard as a cherished treasure destined for the delight of their beloved.

At an international conference on family issues, Dr. Moon explained his revolutionary concept of mutual ownership of sexual organs: "If all men and women recognize that their sexual organs belong to their spouse as well, then they would all bow their heads and become humble when they receive their spouse's love. Love comes to us only from our partner." According to Dr. Moon, because people misunderstand who owns their sexual organs, the world is perishing. The standard for evaluating the righteousness of a human being is the proper use of the sexual organs to experience absolute sex between husband and wife. Absolute sex is the highest ideal of sexual love. The pursuit of this ideal calls us to safeguard our chastity before marriage and then practice fidelity to a life-long marriage partner.



## PART 4: Strategies for Strengthening Marriage

The above explanations of the potential of marriage and the significance of conjugal love highlight the need for reclaiming a marriage culture or strengthening an existing one. Parents, educators and other community leaders can join in initiatives to support husband and wife in their commitment to each other. The home, the entire educational system, and the wider community all have important roles in upholding the value of marriage. Strengthening existing marriages and helping couples find more fulfillment in their relationships can help reverse the trend of broken relationships.

### Rebuilding Shattered Dreams

**O**n June 29, 2000 the Smart Marriages conference in Denver, Colorado, assembled leaders of the marriage movement in the United States. Participants created a document entitled, "The Marriage Movement: A Statement of Principles." More than 100 prominent scholars, religious and civic leaders signed a statement that reads in part:

"Marriage is a universal human institution, the way in which every known society con-

spires to obtain for each child the love, attention, and resources of a mother and a father.... We come together to enlarge and energize this emerging effort to renew the marriage vow and the marriage vision. We come together to help more men and women achieve a caring, collaborative, and committed bond, rooted in equal regard between spouses. We come together to pledge that in this decade we will turn the tide on marriage and reduce divorce and unmarried childbearing, so that

each year more children will grow up protected by their own two happily married parents, and so that each year more adults' marriage dreams will come true."

The goal of the Marriage Movement is to "rebuild the shattered dream of lasting love and to pass on a healthier, happier, and more successful marriage culture to the next generation."<sup>†</sup>

<sup>†</sup> Published by the Institute for American Values, 1841 Broadway, Suite 211, New York, NY 10123. The text of the statement can be read and signed online at [marriagemovement.org](http://marriagemovement.org).

### A. Support Parents as Moral Educators

Recent research indicates that the primary influences on children's moral development are the loving care, moral example and leadership of parents.<sup>23</sup> When children grow up without the presence of both parents in the home, education in universal moral values becomes even more important. Furthermore, educators can assist parents in their role as the primary moral educators of their children.

#### Inspirational Family Gathering

- ❖ Reading wisdom literature
- ❖ Sharing stories of virtue



IEF has published books to support the parents' role as moral educators by promoting values discussions in the home. Parents are encouraged to use literature containing moral wisdom and engaging content to be read together by all family members in regular inspirational gatherings. Parents and children have discovered such family gatherings and reading programs to be a natural context for bringing up topics such as love, marriage and sex.

## B. Promote Healthy Behavior among Youth

With the sexual revolution removing the stigma of premarital sex, promiscuous lifestyles gained widespread acceptance and were promoted by advertisers and the entertainment industry. Adult expectations that youth would engage in promiscuous sex have become self-fulfilling prophecies. The values promoted in popular culture have glamorized casual sex and individualistic lifestyles.

Parents, teachers, community leaders and policy makers can work together to promote healthy, responsible behavior in youth. Initiated by social organizations in cooperation with concerned public officials, youth programs to counteract the prevailing atmosphere of selfishness and irresponsibility in matters of love and sex are appearing around the world. A new wave of youth leaders rallying around issues of chastity, sobriety and love for family and country has provided an infusion of positive peer pressure into the youth scene. According to research, taking a pledge is a powerful support to commitment to purity for young people.<sup>24</sup> Such groups as True Love Waits, the Pure Love Alliance and IEF are inspiring thousands of young people to commit to a lifestyle that affirms abstinence until marriage and lifelong faithfulness in marriage.

## C. Match Young Couples with Mentor Couples

Elder couples can be encouraged to take responsibility to mentor young couples. The position of mentor is not a parent, but more like an older friend. It does not need to be a long-term commitment. Each mentoring relationship has its own lifecycle, depending on the parties involved. Elder couples can share with engaged couples or newlyweds their accumulated wisdom about communication, handling money,

**Promote Healthy Living Among Youth**

- ❖ Self respect
- ❖ Sobriety
- ❖ Sexual purity

**Fulfilled Couples — Source of Strength**



- ❖ Better parents
- ❖ Mentors to other couples
- ❖ Pillars of the community



conflict resolution, etc. Various types of organizations have initiated courses along these lines. Although these are relatively new, initial results suggest that such programs help newlyweds survive the rough transition into married life. As a bonus, mentor couples find their own relationship enhanced through serving others.

Couples who have stayed together for 30, 40 or more years are not necessarily those with fewer conflicts or problems. The difference between successful and unsuccessful marriages is in how couples handle their differences. Couples in healthy marriages have acquired relationship skills that help them cultivate long-term happiness and satisfaction.

Veteran couples can prepare young couples to sustain their marriage commitment when the flames of romantic love diminish. One marriage expert says, "We get married for the wrong reasons because we haven't matured enough for the right reasons to exist yet. Struggling with the wrong reason for getting married can produce right reasons to stay married."<sup>25</sup>

The kind of character and heart developed by veteran couples is the result of a life of continuously practicing love towards their partners. While they may not be experts in marriage counseling, veteran couples can share their real-life stories of victories and mistakes. Such stories are a great resource for young couples. One couple celebrating 25 years of marriage explained: "Early in our marriage most of our conflicts came from trying to change one another, which only led to frustration. It was only after both of us started taking responsibility for personal growth that we could reconcile our relationship. Then in the process of working on our relationship, both of us and our relationship changed for the better."

#### **D. Sponsor Marriage Rededication Ceremonies**

To promote noble examples of loving couples for a healthy and prosperous society, IEF has joined with other organizations in countries around the world to sponsor festivals to honor couples who are committed to each other and their families. These "True Love Blessing Festivals" provide an opportunity for couples to rededicate their marriage by pledging to become a model couple centered on true love and sharing a lasting, unique and unchanging love as spouses. Uplifting the tradition of true love in the family is

#### **Strengthen Marriages**

- ❖ Rededication ceremonies
- ❖ Mentoring young couples



the basis of true family values. Additionally, couples who are celebrating their silver or golden wedding anniversaries are honored as examples for the next generation. The entertainment is provided by the couples themselves, creating a culture of heart among all participants.

One such ceremony in China was officiated by Mr. You Qiwen and his wife, Mrs. Kong Lingren. The ceremony took place in Qufu, the hometown of Confucius, and followed an IEF Conference on Family Ethics and Spiritual Civilization. At the end of the conference, Mrs. Kong, the 76th descendant of Confucius said, "I never had given much thought as to the secret of the success of our 50-year marriage. But after listening to the IEF lectures, then it occurred to me—yes, true love is the key—living for the sake of the happiness and joy of my spouse."

## True Love Pledge

In marriage blessing festivals around the world, couples have recited vows such as the following:

In the presence of Heaven and Earth, and united in mind and body, we pledge to cherish the following ideals and responsibilities:

To strive to perfect ourselves as individuals with hearts of true love; to offer absolute loyalty to our spouse and maintain the sacred bond of marriage for eternity, without divorce or separation; to

pursue a meaningful and harmonious relationship.

To strive to become an ideal couple with a heart of true love and cultivate this realm of heart within our family through parental love, conjugal love, sibling's love and children's love; to respect and care for our parents and relatives; and to extend the realm of family love to the society, nation and world.

To strive to become ideal parents with a heart of true love; to educate our children by setting an

example and leading them to become embodiments of truth, beauty and goodness; to guide them to offer filial piety to parents, respect to elders, earnest efforts for the society and nation, and to dedicate their lives for the sake of the world.

To strive to become a model family with a heart of true love, and help other families to find fulfillment and harmony, in order to realize a world of freedom, unity and happiness.

## Conclusion

This presentation began with a recognition of the many assaults on marriage presented by popular culture. It then explored the deep meaning of marriage and its significance for both individual fulfillment and the stability of society. Several strategies for strengthening marriage were offered.

The presentation that follows outlines common aspects of marriage enrichment programs that help couples revive a stagnant relationship and achieve the full potential of their marriage relationship.

<sup>1</sup> David Popenoe and Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, *The State of Our Unions, The National Marriage Project* (Rutgers, NJ: The State University of New Jersey, 1999), p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Lawrence Stone, professor at Princeton University, quoted by Stephen R. Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Families* (New York: Golden Books, 1997), p. 123.

<sup>3</sup> Statistical Abstracts of the United States, 1998.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Census Annual Population Reports. P-23-180, 1992, p. 5.

<sup>5</sup> Documentation of these statistics and an evaluation of divorce statistics are available from Americans for Divorce Reform, 2111 Wilson Blvd., Suite 550, Arlington, VA 22201. See also [divorcereform.org](http://divorcereform.org).

<sup>6</sup> Statistics Bureau, Chinese Ministry of Civil Affairs.

<sup>7</sup> Paul R. Amato and Stacy J. Rogers, "Do Attitudes toward Divorce Affect Marital Quality?" *Journal of Family Issues*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (January 1999), pp. 69-86.

<sup>8</sup> 1998 poll conducted by the Minnesota Family Institute. Quoted by Bill Doherty, professor of family social science at the University of Minnesota.

<sup>9</sup> National Center for Health Statistics, U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1998.

<sup>10</sup> *Monthly Vital Statistics Report*, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; National Center for Health Statistics, Vol. 44, No. 11(S), June 24, 1996.

<sup>11</sup> "The Death of Marriage?" Cover story of *Newsweek*, January 20, 1997.

<sup>12</sup> For example, the annual rates of depression among cohabiting couples are more than three times what they are among married couples. See Lee Robins and Darel Reiger, *Psychiatric Disorders in America* (New York: Free Press, 1990), p. 72.

<sup>13</sup> David Popenoe and Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, "Should We Live Together? What Young Adults Need to Know about Cohabitation before Marriage. A Comprehensive Review of Recent Research," obtained from [www.smart-marriages.com](http://www.smart-marriages.com).

<sup>14</sup> David Blankenhorn, *Fatherless America* (New York: Basic Books, 1995), p. 46.

<sup>15</sup> Popenoe and Whitehead, *The State of Our Unions*.

<sup>16</sup> *Marriage in America: A Report to the Nation*, Council on Families in America, Institute for American Values, March 1995, p. 5.

<sup>17</sup> Ninety percent of American young people say they hope to marry someday. U.S. Bureau of the Census, CPR Series P-23, No. 172, June 1989, 3-4, and Series P-20, No. 45, June 1990, p. 2, 9.

<sup>18</sup> Vladimir Sergeyevich Solovyev, *The Meaning of Love*, Translated by Thomas R. Beyer (Hudson NY: Lindisfarne Press, 1985).

<sup>19</sup> Emil Brunner, *Man in Revolt*.

<sup>20</sup> Diane Medved, *The Case against Divorce* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1989), p. 256.

<sup>21</sup> James Q. Wilson, *The Moral Sense*. Brigitte Berger, "The Social Roots of Prosperity and Liberty," *Society*, Vol. 35, Issue 3 (Mar.-Apr. 1998).



<sup>22</sup> Thomas Lickona, "The Neglected Heart," *American Educator*, Summer, 1994, p. 39.

<sup>23</sup> Thomas Lickona, "Do Parents Make a Difference in Children's Character Development? What the Research Shows." Unpublished paper presented at the Fourth Annual Fall Character Education Seminar, November 20, 1998.

<sup>24</sup> Michael Resnick, et al., "Protecting Adolescents from Harm," *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 278/10 (September 10, 1997), p. 830.

<sup>25</sup> David Schnarch, *Passionate Marriage: Sex, Love and Intimacy in Emotionally Committed Relationships* (New York: Norton, 1997), p. 51.

## **APPENDIX: Public Policy Initiatives That Support Marriage**

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted in 1948 states: “The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.”<sup>1</sup> To provide protection and support so that marriages can remain strong requires a collaboration of government, education, community associations and the mass media. The following suggestions for public policy initiatives can be adapted according to circumstances.<sup>2</sup>

- Promote education that emphasizes the virtues that help sustain marriage.
- Establish programs that teach relationship-building skills to children and adults, and train a variety of people to teach the skills.
- Develop youth outreach programs to teach young people about the virtues and advantages of marriage and the value of abstinence before marriage.
- Create a public health campaign to inform people of the long-term benefits of marriage. Focus on reaching couples when they are most receptive to guidance: when preparing to marry and when expecting a baby.
- Educate public officials about the importance of marriage: clerks who issue marriage licenses, welfare workers, public health nurses, school nurses and school counselors, agricultural advisors, mental health professionals and parole officers.
- Encourage couples to enter into marriage with a solemn commitment to an enduring relationship. For example, reduce the marriage license fee for couples who take a marriage preparation course.
- Develop programs to strengthen existing marriages, such as marriage resource centers where couples can seek information and find mentors to help support their marriage.



- Use the mass media to promote a culture that honors marriage and commitment.
- Establish marriage research centers to study what works locally to promote stable marriages, discourage divorce and reduce out-of-wedlock births. Establish scholars-in-residence programs, drawing on the wisdom of psychologists, sociologists, economists, jurists and indigenous leaders.
- Remove any tax disincentives to marriage. Remove any marriage penalties in public welfare programs and offer incentives to unwed parents who marry. In addition, offer incentives—such as a one-time tax credit when their youngest child reaches age 18—for couples who remain married throughout their child-raising years.
- Establish mediation programs for couples who seek a divorce, to help them try to salvage the relationship. Encourage couples to enroll in a marriage enrichment course and offer scholarships to those who cannot afford the fee.
- Grant a divorce to couples with a child only when it can be shown that substantial harm would result to the child if the marriage were to continue.
- Establish national goals for reducing rates of divorce and out-of-wedlock births.

The following organizations offer helpful information:

- The Coalition for Marriage, Family and Couples Education: Diane Sollee, Director, 5310 Belt Road, NW, Washington, DC 20015-1961. Telephone: (202) 362-3332 — [smartmarriages.com](http://smartmarriages.com)
- Marriage Savers: Mike & Harriet McManus, Co-chairs, 9311 Harrington Drive, Potomac, MD 20854. Telephone: (301) 469-5873 — [marriagesavers.org](http://marriagesavers.org)
- National Marriage Project: David Popenoe and Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, Co-directors. Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, 54 Joyce Kilmer Ave., Lucy Stone Hall, A347, Piscataway, NJ 08901. Telephone: (732) 445-7922 — [marriage@rci.rutgers.edu](mailto:marriage@rci.rutgers.edu)

There is an interesting example of a couple who read about the Community Marriage policies being implemented in the United States and spearheaded their adoption in their hometown of Totnes, England. Chris and Claire Grimshaw began by inviting the mayor and 13 other leading citizens of their town to dinner in their home and made a broad proposal to teach relationship skills to every adult and child in their community of 20,000 people. Four programs are currently in place:

- At childbirth, health workers teach relationship skills to both the father and mother.
- In kindergarten classes, children are taught how to make friends.
- In secondary schools and community colleges, students are being taught communication and conflict-resolution skills.
- Religious leaders require engaged couples to go through a marriage preparation program before getting married.

The Totnes model has attracted national interest.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> United Nations, "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" (1948), Article 16-3.

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from Patrick F. Fagan & Robert Rector, "The Effects of Divorce on Children," Backgrounder 1373, Heritage Foundation, June 5, 2000, and Patrick F. Fagan, "Increasing Marriage and Decreasing Divorce," draft publication of the Heritage Foundation. See also Waite and Gallagher, *The Case for Marriage*; Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, "To Have and to Hold: Strategies to Strengthen Marriage and Relationships" (Canberra, Australia, 1998); Theodora Ooms, *Toward More Perfect Unions: Putting Marriage on the Public Agenda* (Washington, D.C.: Family Impact Seminar, 1998).

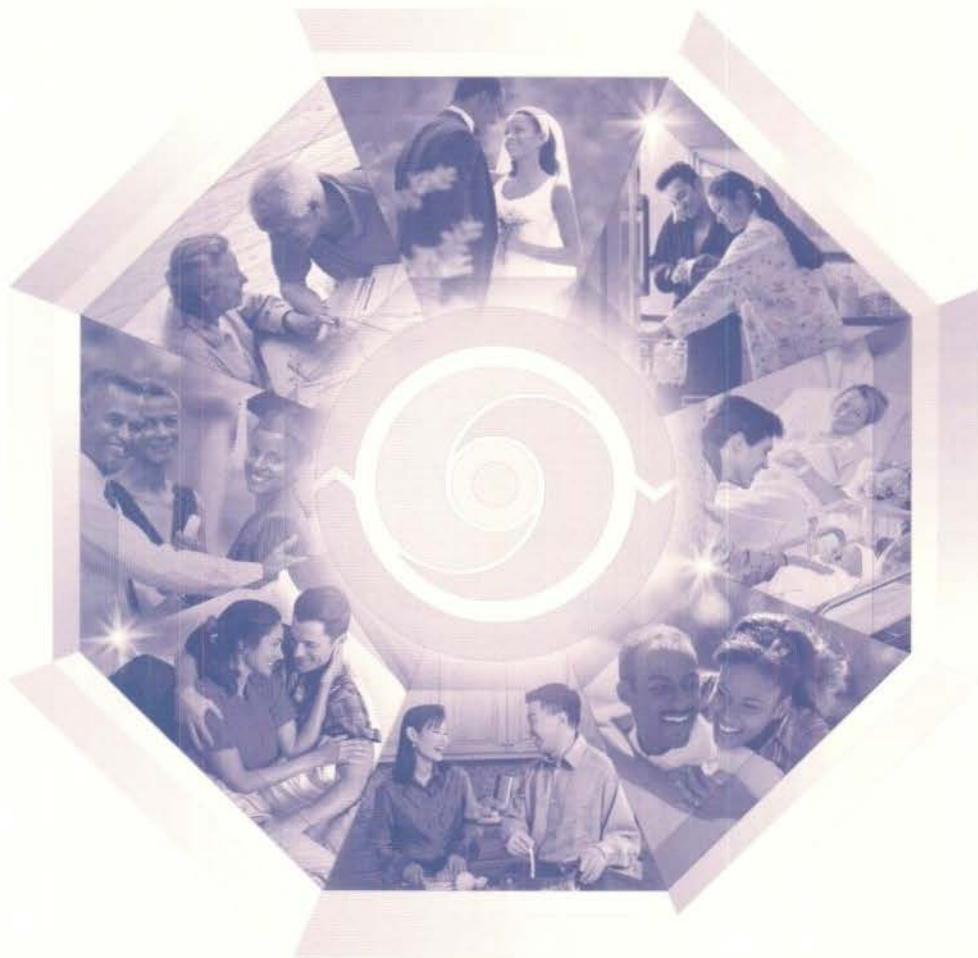
<sup>3</sup> Ethics & Religion Column #1964, by Mike McManus, syndicated columnist, February 19, 2000.



*Searching for Life's True Purpose*

PERSPECTIVES ON MORALITY AND ETHICS

# Building Healthy Marriages



INTERNATIONAL EDUCATIONAL  
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*Tenth in a Series*



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# Introduction

The presentation on Promoting a Marriage Culture emphasized the importance of marriage as a public concern. While marriage is indeed a public concern, our private happiness must be the core of the marriage relationship. Ultimately, personally satisfying marriages that provide new depths of spiritual growth and transformation are key motivators for promoting and maintaining a marriage culture. This presentation offers ways to make marriage more satisfying and enduring.

Some couples enter marriage sincerely in love with each other but lacking direction and sustaining power. They are like a moon rocket, filled with explosives sufficient for take-off but without cruising power or navigation. People caught up in the bliss of romantic love think that it will sustain them through the ups and downs of life. However, in countries where a third to a half of marriages fall apart, couples need more than romantic love.

An effective marriage-enrichment program needs a moral foundation. Virtues, or qualities of character, help hold a marriage together and promote healthy relationships, growth and fulfillment. As explained in the presentation on the Family as the School of Love, there are four realms of heart in the family, each with its core virtues. The core virtues in the conjugal realm of heart are fidelity and commitment. Building a healthy marriage is a life-long task. Commitment is like the mortar of a marriage, and fidelity defines its boundaries. Numerous other virtues grow out of the core of commitment and fidelity to ensure a strong and healthy marriage. Within this structure, husband and wife can enjoy trust, intimacy and freedom, because they are confident of each other's total loyalty and support.



## PART 1: Grounding Marriage in Good Character

Lasting love is sustained by qualities of character, not merely romantic feelings. A marriage is only as strong as the character of the husband and wife. The willingness to take responsibility, defer gratification, sacrifice for the sake of others, and work to help others are invaluable assets in a marriage. The more people strengthen their character, the more they have to offer a relationship. Lasting love is not a matter of chance or luck; it grows out of the depths of one's character.

There are many ways to develop character: reflection, studying the wisdom of others, developing a variety of interests and friendships, and working for worthwhile goals. All these approaches help people develop the inner resources of character to share with their partner.

A simple appreciation for one's spouse goes a long way toward creating happiness and harmony in marriage. A man and a woman may be initially attracted by the differences in personality. Later on, these differences may become irritating. It is helpful if husband and wife can regard each other as resources for developing a more well-rounded personality. Self-discipline helps people focus more on improving their own areas of weakness rather than belittling the ones they love.

### Build Own Character Strength



A partnership is only as strong as its partners

- ❖ Strengthen conscience through study and service
- ❖ Cultivate good goals, interests and friendships

### Focus on Own Deficiencies, Not Spouse's



Practice self-discipline



## PART 2: Creating a Protective Realm

### Commitment — Context for Love to Grow



- ❖ Creates safety for intimacy
- ❖ Allows time to discover spouse
  - Never ending process

### Commitment = Investment in the Marriage

#### Close “escape hatches”

- ❖ Workaholism
- ❖ Preoccupation with child
- ❖ Excessive television
- ❖ Extramarital affair

Divorce not an option

### Fidelity

- ❖ Embodies commitment
- ❖ Maintains honesty
- ❖ Eases fears that block intimacy

A marriage that is based only on romantic feelings may have difficulty weathering the inevitable storms of life. Challenges arise in every marriage. Only commitment can sustain a marriage through the times when romance fades, discouragement sets in or conflicts arise. Commitment does not mean simply enduring a difficult relationship. It means a mutual dedication to making the marriage work. It creates safety for intimacy and love to grow. It creates an emotional protective zone where partners can confide their problems, frustrations and conflicts and be received with love. Couples can benefit from mentors and sources of guidance for making their marriage a well-spring of happiness and fulfillment.

Marriage counselors advise couples to set aside time for each other by closing off any tempting exits. While work, hobbies, recreation, and friendship are healthy, sometimes people use them to escape the challenges of marriage. When a child is born, the husband will feel shut out if his wife devotes herself totally to the baby.

Fidelity seals off the escape hatches. Passion and fidelity are not contradictory. Fidelity removes fears and promotes safety and freedom in marriage. The two deepest fears people have in relationships are being abandoned or being absorbed by their partner. When husband and wife are assured of their partner’s fidelity, they can slowly shed their fears of abandonment. They will also be less dependent on each other and can enjoy a greater sense of autonomy and fulfillment.

## PART 3: Developing Intimacy through Trust

Love is built on trust, and marriage and sexuality demand great trust. Over time, husband and wife reveal their deepest and most vulnerable selves to each other. The fear of rejection inhibits intimacy and passion. Intimacy comes only on the foundation of faithfulness, and the degree of intimacy depends on the strength of fidelity.

Catherine Wallace writes: "Intimacy is not possible except between two people who have a profound faith in one another. Sexual fidelity is a practice intrinsic to the happiness of a happy marriage.... [It] is a growing, living thing that interacts with and reorganizes all the other ingredients of the marriage."<sup>1</sup>

### Love – Built on Trust



Trust is built on virtue

- ❖ Fidelity
- ❖ Commitment



## PART 4: Cultivating a Joint View of Life

*"A marriage that commands  
loyalty...requires each partner  
to relinquish self-centeredness."*

*John W. Wellerstein, The Good Marriage*

Marriage involves a moral transformation from self-centeredness to we-centeredness. One marriage counselor has come to the conclusion that virtually all marital problems boil down to self-centeredness.<sup>2</sup>

Noted author Steven Covey encourages families to make a "mission statement" of what they want their family to stand for.<sup>3</sup> Just as a constitution provides order and security in national life, a basic mission statement can unite a home around certain fundamental principles of life. Formulating such a statement helps draw a couple together; older children can participate in the process. A family mission statement shapes the family climate and guides it in times of confusion and stress. It contributes to the family's peace, harmony and security.

**True Love Is  
Other-Centered**



Happily married couples respect their partners and do not regret what they give to each other. They show kindness without expecting to be repaid. They neither weigh their gifts, nor do they keep records. They show a natural desire to support and encourage their partner's growth and development. To attain such a love requires practice, understanding and personal maturity.



## PART 5: Investing Time, Effort, Thought and Heart

Harmonious interaction flows from the willingness of each partner to give to the other. In the words of one marriage counselor, "Love flows more freely from what we give than what we get from others."<sup>4</sup> The essence of marriage is sharing. In addition to sharing material goods, husband and wife open up their innermost beings and hearts. Love requires investment of time, effort, thought and heart. Whatever we invest our care and concern into will thrive. This is the power of interaction. When we spend time tending our garden or home, it reflects our care and brings us joy. The same is true for a marriage. Even busy couples who take time for each other find that it pays big dividends in sustaining a harmonious relationship.

The daily give and take in a marriage can be compared to making deposits to an emotional account and withdrawing from it. A good marriage requires good investments. Such investments build companionship and enjoyment.

Deposits are any positive interaction—a compliment, a kind word, a favor done, a service or gift given. Some couples go out together regularly, perhaps for coffee or a walk in a park, to strengthen their connections with each other. When husband and wife keep replenishing the account by giving to each other, even in little ways, the "account" will be solvent. A marriage thrives when the deposits far outnumber the withdrawals.

There are inevitable withdrawals—arguments, harsh words, neglect, selfishness. However, if the overall pattern is deposits, there will be enough good will to compensate for the withdrawals.

### Love Requires Investment



### Deposits



- ❖ Service
- ❖ Kind gestures
- ❖ Praise and appreciation

### Invest in the Marital "Bank Account"



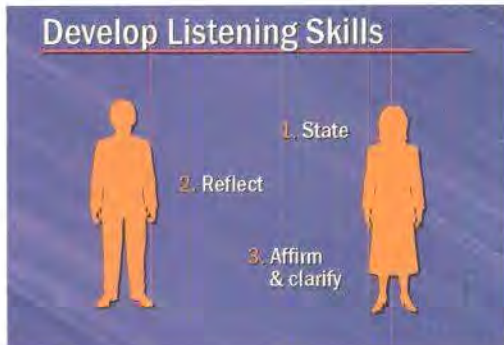
- Become friends
- ❖ Build companionship
- ❖ Have fun together
- 5 deposits for 1 withdrawal

### Withdrawals

1. Criticism
2. Personal attacks
3. Defensiveness
4. Putting up walls



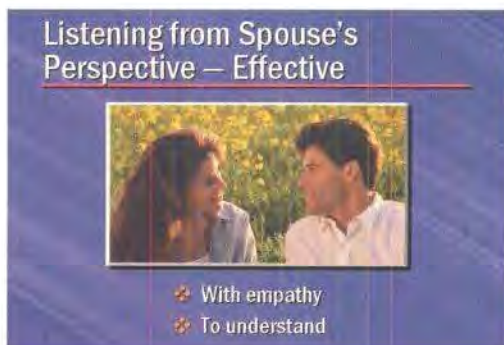
## PART 6: Learning to Listen Well



Good communication plays a key role in a good marriage. Since a large part of communication is non-verbal, we need to remember that our motives and heart come across, too. If we approach people with a good heart and good motivation, they will sense it and tend to respond in kind.

When sensitive issues need to be discussed, it is helpful to choose a time and setting that will be free from stress and distractions. A trusted mediator can help guide communication. While communication may be thought of as primarily talking, listening is just as important. Sometimes counselors recommend a process called reflective listening, in which each person takes a turn expressing his or her feelings and viewpoints. Communication is enhanced when the speaker is fair and considerate of the listener, describing how a situation affects himself or herself, rather than accusing or blaming the listener.

The speaker continues until he or she is finished. During this time, the listener focuses his or her entire attention on what is said, responding by paraphrasing the speaker's words reflecting the content as accurately as possible. The speaker affirms the reflections that are accurate, clarifies any misunderstandings, and goes on to the next point. After the first speaker is finished, the roles are reversed, and the listener becomes the speaker.



Good listening requires patience and a willingness to focus one's time and concern to the other person. It means paying attention to the other person without arguing or becoming defensive. As a means of promoting empathy and understanding, listening fosters true love.



## PART 7: Dealing with Typical Sources of Conflict

American marriage counselors report that tensions in marriage typically arise over a few key issues. These include sex, in-laws, finances and children.

### A. Sex

Men and women tend to approach sex differently. Women usually need to be relaxed in order to enjoy sex; hence the things women associate with “romance”—such as a candlelit dinner, a stroll in a park and soft background music—make them more relaxed and receptive to sex. Sex is linked to the overall quality of the marriage. If there are good feelings, mutual helpfulness and support, the couple’s sexual life will probably be quite satisfactory. At the same time, couples who recognize how important sex is in building intimacy will make time for this important aspect of their relationship. It is hurtful to withhold sex as a weapon against one’s spouse. Differences in sexual desires are normal, and stress, aging and illness may alter desire. A doctor may be consulted to determine if there is an underlying medical cause that can be treated. With good communication, sensitivity, patience, negotiation and creativity, couples can navigate the changing currents of desire and find ways to experience intimacy.

### B. In-laws

Another potential area of conflict is the relationship among in-laws, especially between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. In many cultures, a mother-in-law may dominate her daughter-in-law and treat her as a servant. The daughter-in-law may be expected to submit until the day she ascends to the position of mother-in-law and carries on the pattern. Caught between the two women, the son might side with his mother out of fear of alienating her. In the West, young couples tend to move out on their own to escape the domination of the older generation. In many cases, they lose parental guidance and support, and their children miss the opportunity to develop deep bonds with the grandparents. As people age and their health declines, there is no family to care for them.

Conflict between the generations is not inevitable. Empathy and gratitude can help both generations get along

### Common Areas of Marital Tension



- ❖ Sex
- ❖ In-Laws
- ❖ Finances
- ❖ Children



better. The older generation can remember how they felt as newlyweds and show consideration for the new couple. Their lives can be enriched by opening their hearts to their child's spouse and the grandchildren born through them. In turn, the daughter-in-law or son-in-law can be grateful to the parents who gave birth to and raised their spouse. Virtue and good character help smooth the adjustments as the new couple expands the nest or leaves to form a new nest.

### **C. Finances**

Finances are another heated issue in marriage. It is good practice to keep one's expenses within the limits of family income and not incur a heavy burden of debt. Husband and wife do well to make both short-term and long-term financial goals and consult with each other, especially about major expenses. Conflicts about finances often have emotional dimensions. Childhood attitudes carry over into adulthood, even when financial circumstances are very different. A spoiled young woman may not feel happy living on her husband's income. People who grew up in poverty may never feel they have enough, even when they are doing well financially. Couples in such circumstances can benefit from the wisdom of a trusted advisor.

### **D. Children**

When a couple become parents, pressures of time, energy and finances may increase. Husband and wife bring from their childhood differing experiences and expectations that affect their parenting. Common areas of differences include rules, discipline, safety, nutrition, education and recreation. Through good communication, following their conscience and seeking advice of trusted elders, parents can make good decisions on these issues. The virtues of investment and compassion learned in the family school of love are invaluable resources in parenting.

### **E. Other sources**

Sometimes conflicts are rooted in serious offenses, such as addictions, violence or adultery. In such cases, the offender needs to take responsibility and go through a process of change before a marriage can be restored to health. Many marital conflicts, however, come from basic personality or cultural differences. They may center on work, leisure time, food or home management. In such cases, husband and wife

can learn to be patient and appreciate each other's good qualities. It is helpful to recognize that everyone has faults, frailties and limitations, and marriage offers an ideal setting for mutual encouragement and support in the lifelong process of growth.

Anger can become a part of any relationship, including marriage. There are several rules of thumb for dealing with anger:

- Never become violent.
- Cool down by taking a walk, leaving the room or doing something else to change the mood.
- Recognize that underneath the anger there is usually hurt or fear. Someone is much more likely to be open to a sincere statement such as, "It hurt me very much when you ..." than to an angry counterattack.

Additional discussion of conflict resolution in marriage is found in the presentation on Causes and Resolution of Conflict.

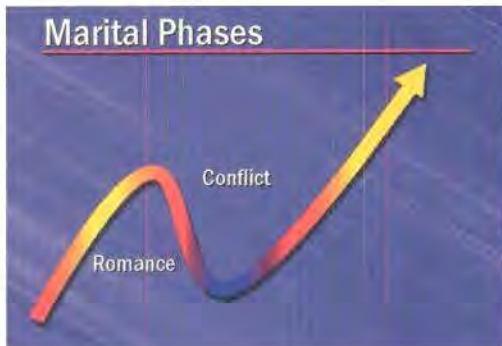
### Dealing with Anger



- ❖ Never use physical violence
- ❖ Allow time for cooling down
- ❖ Get to the root emotions – Hurt & fear



## PART 8: Handling the Ups and Downs of Marriage



Marriages go through somewhat predictable phases. Storms are inevitable in a marriage, and husband and wife need a certain resiliency to weather the storms.

### A. Romance

During courtship, people put their best foot forward. They dress with care, put on their best behavior and focus on having a good time. Often they are still supported by their parents and are free of many worries and responsibilities. The wedding is a time of special celebration, surrounded by family and friends. The initial phase of conjugal love has a sweet illusion of blissful oneness. The couple may believe that these feelings will last, but they are only a temporary foretaste of the depths of love that will emerge based on their investment in building their marriage.

### B. Conflict

In time, the realities of each person's limitations become apparent. The differences that were initially attractive become annoying. Husband and wife have to learn to adjust to each other and face inevitable conflicts, disappointments and anxieties. Conflict can be seen as an opportunity for growth. This phase offers husband and wife opportunities to learn to know each other without illusions and learn to love each other as real human beings.



Out of ignorance or immaturity, couples in this phase may resign themselves to a marriage that lacks intimacy. They may escape into their work, hobbies or children. Sometimes people have an affair or seek a divorce, hoping to recapture the initial taste of romantic love with someone else. If they do divorce and remarry, however, the second marriage is more likely to break up than the first marriage. The way forward is for couples to renew their commitment to their marriage and work to raise their relationship to a higher level.

In addition to the predictable phases of marriage, parenting offers challenges of its own, especially when a child is born, starts school and leaves home. Crises may occur, such as the loss of a job, a devastating illness, a



natural disaster or the death of a child. Such times of stress may bring husband and wife closer together or drive them apart. They offer an opportunity to cultivate virtues such as understanding, patience and selflessness. Healthy marriages are anchored by commitment and fidelity.

### **C. Recommitment and Cooperation**

Wise spouses begin to realize the need to make sacrifices for the sake of each other and their relationship. They search within themselves for areas they need to change, heal and grow. Over time, they develop a deep intimacy and security.



## PART 9: Strengthening Marriage through Public Service

### Public Service Strengthens Marriage



- ✦ Spouses support each other in service
- ✦ Balance public and family time

*"Love does not consist in gazing at each other but in looking together in the same direction."*

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

As their capacity to love deepens, many couples feel moved to reach out to others. A husband and wife whose love for each other has deepened and matured over the years have unique resources of empathy, understanding and compassion to share with others. This in turn enriches their relationship.

This ultimate phase of love has been described in various ways. Erich Fromm wrote: "Love is an attitude, an orientation of character which determines the relatedness of a person to the world as a whole.... If I truly love one person, I love all persons, I love the world."<sup>5</sup> A marriage that is founded upon shared ideals tends to be happier and more resilient than a marriage that revolves around material goals or status. French author Antoine de Saint-Exupéry wrote: "Love does not consist in gazing at each other but in looking together in the same direction."<sup>6</sup> Public service is the secret of many strong and fulfilling marriages.

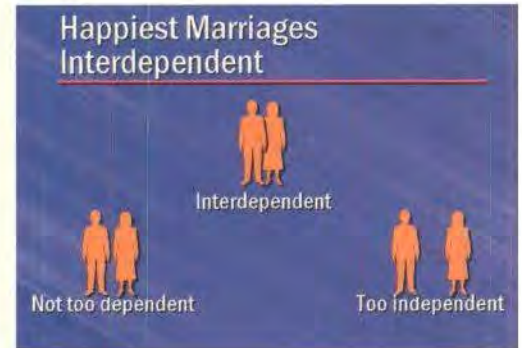


## PART 10: Finding Fulfillment through Interdependence

Marriage is potentially the context for the greatest fulfillment in life. A good marriage is a blending of two people into one. In the happiest marriages, husband and wife are neither too dependent or too independent of each other.

“Wholeness is found in an interdependent relationship ... of mutual influence and emotional support,” observe marriage educators Les and Leslie Parrott. “They could stand on their own but they choose to be together.”<sup>7</sup>

Husband and wife can be invaluable partners in the process of restoring what was unfulfilled earlier in life, and the joint adventure can be exciting. The process of maturation is not completed on the wedding day; marriage can help husband and wife redeem earlier stages of their lives, provided that each is committed to the relationship and to each other’s well-being.



### The Beauty of Love

The question is asked: “Is there anything more beautiful in life than a young couple clasping hands and pure hearts in the path of marriage? Can there be anything more beautiful than young love?”

And the answer is given: “Yes, there is a more beautiful thing. It is the spectacle of an old man and an old woman finishing their journey together on that path. Their hands are gnarled, but still clasped; their faces are seamed,

but still radiant; their hearts are physically bowed and tired, but still strong with love and devotion for one another. Yes, there is a more beautiful thing than young love. Old love.”



## Conclusion

The presentations on Preparing Youth for Marriage, Promoting a Marriage Culture and Building Healthy Marriages reexamine traditional values in the light of current research and integrate them with contemporary values, such as the quest for personal fulfillment.

Judith Wallerstein, whose research has been tracking families for more than a decade, concludes that marriage is “the axis around which people can change and grow.”<sup>8</sup>

In a long-term study of couples who consider their marriages to be happy and successful, she found that a good marriage is a psychologically healing and enhancing experience. “Men and women come to adulthood unfinished and over the course of a marriage they change each other profoundly ... ways of thinking, self-image, self-esteem and values all have the potential for change.... Every good marriage provides healing.”<sup>9</sup> Husband and wife can spend a lifetime healing and growing together.

One educator describes the transformative power of marriage this way: “Both partners are drawn outside of themselves ... because they must learn to care for and care about someone outside their control. A permanent, embedded, embodied responsibility for someone else can be a transforming experience.”<sup>10</sup>

Another family educator states, “A great marriage is one where both recognize that the other is a mystery, and that together, they complete each other and make up a unit which is greater than the sum of the parts. Each contributes to the marriage and values the contribution of the other as equal and indispensable.”<sup>11</sup>

Family stability is the foundation of society and merits social support. Many cultures have traditions of honoring the nobility of marriage and family while promoting the qualities of character that strengthen marriages and lead to happy families. A fulfilling marriage is the awesome reward of the joint creative efforts of husband and wife. Couples united in lasting love are a blessing to their community and the pride of their nation.

### Marriage Can Be Healing and Restorative



Resolves psychological issues

- ❖ Childhood scars
- ❖ Family history

### Marriage Can Be Transformative



Maturing experience of adult life

- ❖ Creative journey
- ❖ Expands heart and awareness



## The Seven Steps of Marriage

The Hindu tradition recognizes that marriage involves creating unity on many levels. In India, the bride and groom take seven symbolic steps together on their wedding day, representing the seven dimensions of marriage. As they walk together, they recite the following words:

- Let us take the first step to provide for our household a nourishing and pure diet, avoiding those foods injurious to healthy living.
- Let us take the second step to develop physical, mental and spiritual powers.
- Let us take the third step to increase our wealth by righteous means and proper use.

- Let us take the fourth step to acquire knowledge, happiness and harmony by mutual love and trust.
- Let us take the fifth step, so that we may be blessed with strong, virtuous and heroic children.
- Let us take the sixth step, for self-restraint and longevity.
- Finally, let us take the seventh step and be true companions and remain lifelong partners by this wedlock.

Then the bride and groom speak of their unity as a couple embraced by the universe:

“You have become mine forever. Yes, we have become partners. I have become yours. Hereafter, I cannot live without you. Do not

live without me. Let us share the joys. We are word and meaning, united. You are thought and I am sound. May the night be honey-sweet for us; may the morning be honey-sweet for us; may the earth be honey-sweet for us and the heavens be honey-sweet for us. May the plants be honey-sweet for us; may the sun be all honey for us; may the cows yield us honey-sweet milk. As the heavens are stable, as the earth is stable, as the mountains are stable, as the whole universe is stable, so may our union be permanently settled.”<sup>†</sup>

<sup>†</sup> Atharva Veda 14.2.71. This modern version is posted at [www.weddingchannel.com](http://www.weddingchannel.com)

<sup>1</sup> Catherine M. Wallace, *For Fidelity* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), pp. 13-15.

<sup>2</sup> Lawrence J. Crabbe, *Men and Women, Enjoying the Difference* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1991).

<sup>3</sup> Stephen R. Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Families* (New York: Golden Books, 1997).

<sup>4</sup> Michele Weiner-Davis, *Divorce-Busting* (New York: Summit Books, 1992), p. 63.

<sup>5</sup> Erich Fromm, *The Art of Loving* (New York: Harper and Row, 1956), p. 46.

<sup>6</sup> Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *The Little Prince* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1943).

<sup>7</sup> Les & Leslie Parrott, *Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1995).

<sup>8</sup> Judith Wallerstein and Sandra Blakeslee, *The Good Marriage* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1995), p. 67.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Wallace, *For Fidelity*, p. 73.

<sup>11</sup> Scott Simonds, President, Maine Family Association. Personal communication, 5 November 2000.

# Objectives for Presenters

During the course of the presentation, the presenter should:

- Make every effort to engage the audience. This means moving the heart as well as stimulating the intellect. As much as possible, the presentation should be a dynamic interaction between the presenter and the audience.
- Make the presentation one harmonious whole. During the course of the presentation, the audience should be able to see how each slide leads into the next. The presentation should be understood as one entity rather than a series of unconnected statements and ideas.
- Always be aware of the salient points of each slide and make those points clear. Supporting information should be concisely presented and clearly connected to the main points.
- Encourage the audience to reflect personally on the content. This presentation seeks to awaken people to the need to give young people moral and ethical guidance. At the conclusion of the presentation, the audience should have a deeper understanding of how to prepare youth for marriage, promote a marriage culture and build a healthy marriage. As a result, people may feel empowered to exert a substantial positive influence on the youth with whom they come into contact.

Before the presentation, the presenter may look for recent news stories about marriage. Whenever possible, the presenter should meet with members of the audience. Since interactive learning has so much potential, the presenter can try to elicit audience response during the presentation.

Immediately prior to making the presentation, the presenter should reflect on the significance and meaning of the content. When the presenter is newly enthused about the content, then there is a greater likelihood that the audience will also respond with enthusiasm. The presenter may choose to reflect on some of these key points:



- Marriage is the ultimate context for fulfilling life's purpose.
- Most young people hope to get married and are interested in guidance about how to achieve success in marriage.
- People can develop their character and learn the skills that contribute to a healthy marriage.
- The marriage relationship offers the highest potential for character growth.
- The best romance and passion is found within the commitment and trust of the marriage relationship.
- Husband and wife can best satisfy each other's profound human needs for affection, bonding and intimacy.
- Marriage provides a safe haven for weathering life's storms and a reliable harbor from which to expand the experience of love in the family to the world.

NOTE: Slides used in these presentations come primarily from the series Preparing Youth for Marriage and Building Healthy Marriages. A few slides are from the series Family as the School of Love and Ethics of True Love and Sexuality. Three slides in the section Strategies for Strengthening Marriage were created for use in True Love Blessing Festivals.

## **ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION (IEF)**

**T**he International Educational Foundation is a nonsectarian, nonprofit organization founded in 1990 by Dr. and Mrs. Sun Myung Moon to promote moral and ethical education among people of all ages. To that end, the four main objectives of IEF are:

- To cultivate heart and character through a balanced approach to education that integrates the best of Eastern and Western, spiritual and material, and traditional and contemporary values.
- To address youth issues such as abstinence education and drug abuse prevention with a heart-centered approach to character development and an ethic focused on pure love.
- To empower families through marriage and parenting education that upholds the family as the seedbed of virtue and the school of love.
- To promote civic responsibility and foster a culture of peace through teaching about conflict resolution and encouraging volunteerism that reaches across boundaries such as race, religion, ethnicity and nationality.



INTERNATIONAL EDUCATIONAL  
FOUNDATION

*In the presence of Heaven and Earth, and united in mind and body,  
we pledge to cherish the following ideals and responsibilities:*

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To strive to perfect ourselves as individuals with hearts of true love, to offer absolute loyalty to our spouse and maintain the sacred bond of marriage for eternity, without divorce or separation; to pursue a meaningful and harmonious relationship.

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To strive to become an ideal couple with a heart of true love and cultivate this realm of heart within our family through parental love, conjugal love, sibling's love and children's love; to respect and care for our parents and relatives; and to extend the realm of family love to the society, nation and world.

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To strive to become ideal parents with a heart of true love; to educate our children by setting an example and leading them to become embodiments of truth, beauty and goodness; to guide them to offer filial piety to parents, respect to elders, earnest efforts for the society and nation, and to dedicate their lives for the sake of the world.

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To strive to become a model family with a heart of true love, and help other families to find fulfillment and harmony, in order to realize a world of freedom, unity and happiness.

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