

**Sunday School and Discipleship Ministries
International - SDMI**



Marriage
Ministries

**LESSONS FOR MARRIED COUPLES AND
COUPLES WHO HOPE TO MARRY**

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HOW TO IMPLEMENT MARRIAGE MINISTRIES IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

INTRODUCTION:

Marriage is the legal union between a man and a woman, based on Genesis 2:18, where the Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." Each one compliments the other one, and they find company in being together. That is why this relationship is ideal.

But in our times, marriage is deteriorating little by little. The enemy is attacking it at different angles, with his ultimate aim being to destroy it completely.

The Church of the Nazarene understands the value of this relationship created and approved by God, and we want to rescue this special union (Hebrews 13:4).

SDMI has a couple's ministry as a response to this need; we want to share the purposes, goals, needs and ideas that can help us carry out this work, remembering the phrase that marriage is "until death do us part."

PURPOSE:

It is of vital importance that our local churches have a ministry to couples due to the very high incidence of divorce and other problems that are generated through the separation of this union. Children, who expect to have their parents' company, protection, support and love, are often affected.

With God's help, let us take up this challenge so that this ministry may develop within our churches and our communities, working together to rescue this institution created by God.

GENERAL OBJECTIVE:

To teach couples through these lessons to have time to grow, mature, enjoy, learn and share together what God has for them through study and meaningful learning.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES:

- ✓ Facilitate conversion and spiritual growth for couples, helping them to find God's plan for their lives.
- ✓ Provide tools and helpful information for the different stages of crisis faced by marriages.
- ✓ Open spaces where marriages can share their experiences with each other in an environment of trust and confidentiality

THE LEADERS OF THIS MINISTRY

1. The leaders should be a couple who has a good testimony and actively participates in their local church.
2. They should be able to determine the needs and interests of couples in the local congregation by observing, studying, being involved, and in any other way possible.

3. They can provide Bible studies, prayer groups, and other means to help couples in their spiritual growth and development.
4. Work in coordination with the Director of Adult Ministries, and under the leadership of the local SDMI Council, thus avoiding conflicts of dates with other activities.

ACTIVITIES TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT:

- Provide resources and information for married couples, and couples pursuing marriage, to enrich marriage relationships.
- Provide company and guidance in the processes of emotional healing.
- Encourage socialization between couples.
- Offer opportunities for pastoral counseling to help solve problems and marital conflicts.
- Establish links with couples that don't know Christ so that they might find Him.
- Collect an offering in the couples' meetings to cover the expenses of Marriage Ministries activities for those who don't have sufficient finances.
- Provide helpful information for all areas of married life.
- Help to incorporate God's biblical principles for marriage into daily life.
- Plan to have seminars, workshops, social gatherings, retreats, romantic dinners, talks, etc. in order to help marriages in crisis or prevent them ahead of time from entering danger.

WHERE CAN THESE ACTIVITIES TAKE PLACE?

- In a local church, homes, restaurants, etc.
- At the District-level, activities can be developed in local churches, retreat centers, convention centers, hotels, restaurants, etc. Depending on the economic capacity of each group for which the activity is planned.

WHO CAN TAKE PART IN THIS MINISTRY?

Married couples inside and outside the church. Some local ministries also include unmarried couples who are interested in getting married and who want to prepare themselves for marriage.

CONCLUSION:

The ultimate accomplishment of this ministry is to rescue couples who are in danger of divorce, and strengthen and enhance marriages with God's help. Healthy marriages are a sign of healthy churches. Unmarried couples can decide to legalize their relationship with the State and with God.

Best wishes

Rev. Evilanda Solís de Cruz

LESSON 1 - THE IDEAL MARRIAGE

TEXT: MATTHEW 19:5-6

INTRODUCTION:

The ideal marriage has to be cultivated with actions that involve good communication, commitment, and have Christ as the center of the home and their lives. To do this, we will study three important principles for cultivating an ideal marriage.

I. UNCONDITIONAL MUTUAL LOVE.

- a. **Love that is born of the heart:** (1 Corinthians 13:4-8) A pure and sincere love which gives and receives, pleases and is pleased, is cultivated and grows.
- b. **Loyalty and respect:** A married couple is composed of two separate people with different customs and cultures, different habits, who are learning to know each other, etc. They are able to accommodate and understand each other only when they put God at the center of their home and when these two values of loyalty and respect are put into practice.
- c. **Faithfulness:** Both spouses must be faithful to the other. They have made a promise before God on their wedding day "... forsaking all others, keep yourself only unto him, so long as you both shall live" (Manual of the Church of the Nazarene, 2017-2021 p. 278).

II. GOOD COMMUNICATION:

- a. **Good communication** allows the couple to be close and informed. Even though they will be away from each other because of their work situations, can still be in touch. Communication unites the couple more. Nothing should be hidden between them, because sooner or later, everything will come out into the open. It will be more painful if they discover things through third parties. Bad communication leads to mistrust and insecurity.
- b. **Good communication facilitates good harmony:** (Psalm 133) Being totally open will assure them that everything is going well in the home, where there will be harmony and many shared joys and sorrows even when they are not together physically.

III. MUTUAL AGREEMENT

- a. **They must show affection for each other** (share details). Little signs of affection can go a long way such as a loving phrase, a note in bed, a flower, remembering birthdays, or wedding anniversaries etc.
- b. **Agreeing in all activities.** They need to arrive at agreements in their day to day activities such as doing the shopping, making changes to the house, leisure time, what to eat or how to arrange the house, etc. Reaching agreements on these daily matters will unite the couple and prevent serious arguments based on individuality.
- c. **Satisfaction with each other in privacy.** The Bible says in I Corinthians 7:5, "Don't deprive each other except perhaps by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan won't tempt you because of your lack of self-control." This means that a married couple might choose not to have sex for a while by mutual consent, but normally they should mutually enjoy sex, which is what God planned for them.

CONCLUSION:

If we fulfill these principles, we will have ideal marriages fulfilling the teaching of Christ: "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." (Matt. 19:5-6) If we want to have solid relationships, we need to take into account these principles.

LESSON 2 - PEACE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE STORM

TEXT: MATTHEW 8:23-27

INTRODUCTION:

Our marriage life resembles that of a ship sailing on the choppy waters of life. What storms can occur daily?

I. THERE ARE SEVERAL TYPES OF STORMS (v. 24).

- a. Matrimonial problems
- b. Problems with children
- c. Economic problems

We feel that these problems will drown us, that the everything is on top of us. What should we do?

We forget that help is at our side. What can we do? In John 16:33, we see that the disciples were also afraid, but they came to Jesus. In marriage, there is nothing better than together seeking first the kingdom of God to calm the storm in times of conflict.

II. WE SHOULD NOT BE AFRAID (v. 25).

“Save us or we will perish,” Peter cried out. For a moment, he forgot that Jesus was with them in the boat.

Jesus also joins us in the journey of married life. Jesus' answer to Peter is relevant for today's married couples:

- a. Why are you afraid, spouses of little faith?
- b. Jesus is still quietly working (v.26).

He knows he has control of everything; but often we don't put Jesus first in our marriages. We want to resolve conflicts in our own way, and we seek personal benefits and rather than those that would help us as a couple. This is why many marriages are now drowning in their conflicts. In Exodus 14:14-15, Moses in his distress didn't remember what to do, and he cried out to the Lord.

“Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Why are you crying out to me? Tell the Israelites to move on.’”

In other words, Moses knew what he had to do ... he had to act in faith. When Jesus died on the cross, a great victory was accomplished. Now we must march on following Jesus on our journey together as married couples.

III. GOD'S LOVE IS BIGGER THAN THE STORM (v.26).

a. **As Jesus was with his disciples, he is also in your marriage.**

Jesus wants to remove the conflicts, arguments, fighting, and jealousy which appear within marriages as storms which seem to be never ending. God is with each couple, surrounding them with His love.

b. **God makes things simple**

You'll be amazed how God calms the storms in an easy way and brings peace to a marriage. If we go to the Lord with the right attitudes, consecrate our lives on the altar of the Lord, our marriage will be safe.

CONCLUSION:

No matter how bad the marital storm is, if Christ is in the boat of our homes and relationships, our marriages won't sink. Let's not look at the great storm in our marriage, but rather let's see how great Christ is inside the home.

I conclude with the following illustration:

A lady phoned the manager of a theater telling him that she had lost her diamond pin the night before. The manager asked her to wait on line while he searched for it in the first seats where she sat. The pin was found, but when he got back on the phone, the lady had hung up. He waited for her to call again, and then he put an ad in the paper, but the manager never heard from her again.

"What a silly woman!" we would say, but many marriages are like her. We pray to God about our situations, needs and problems at home, but we fail to wait for the answer.

Let's put our marriage in God's hands, and the turbulent waters will become calm, because God, the great captain, is at our side.

LESSON 3 - BARRENNESS WITHIN MARIAGE: HANNAH'S PRAYERS

TEXT: 1 SAMUEL 1:9-11

INTRODUCTION:

Satan uses discouragement to defeat us. He wanted to torment a wife because she was barren. The anger, bitterness and frustrated hopes that this mother felt caused her to pray tirelessly for a son, and she decided to act.

I. ANA MADE A PROMISE TO GOD (v. 11).

- a. Hannah promised God that if He gave her a son, in return she would give her son back to God after he had been weaned.
- b. She promised to prepare her son to serve God in the temple.
- c. She prepared her heart to receive the Lord's answer.

II. ANA SHOWED AN ATTITUDE OF HUMILITY ON RECEIVING ELI'S ANSWER (v. 17).

- a. Her faith caused her to be sure of the answer, even though the priest's response led her to think differently; she remained confident.
- b. Hannah received a double portion of faith, and from there, she was no longer sad.
- c. She ate, and was glad in the confidence, peace and faith in the Lord who would give her what she had asked for.

III. KEPT PROMISES (v.27-28).

- a. God gave her what she had asked for, even the gender she wanted.
- b. Hannah fulfilled her promise and delivered her son to the Lord. She prepared and educated him to serve the Lord.

CONCLUSION:

Hannah was a woman who learned that problems are a means of blessing which test our trust and confidence in the Lord. This Biblical narrative also shows her special qualities from which we, as married couples, can learn a lot:

- Her constant prayer
- Her fervent and consistent faith
- She knew how to overcome obstacles encountered.
- She prepared her son at an early age for holy service with good initial education and respect for Christian values, and above all obedience to his elders.

As married couples, are we preparing our children to be a blessing in the local church?

LESSON 4 - HOW TO BE ONE IN MARRIAGE

TEXT: GENESIS 2:24

INTRODUCTION:

The conjugal relationship was established as the first human institution. The word “unite” carries the meaning of a permanent union which is indissoluble and implies that divorce should not be an option. “One flesh” speaks of a total unity of parts that constitute a whole. One example could be a cluster of grapes, (Numbers 13:23) or the unity in the Trinity (Deuteronomy 6:4). In marriage, two people are joined together as man and wife. This union also includes giving themselves to each other in joyful sex. One result of this sexual union may be the privilege of bringing children into the world.

Why are there so many divorces and infighting? The bond of marriage should be broken only by death (Rom.7:2), adultery (Matthew 19:9), or the abandonment of the unbelieving spouse (1 Corinthians 7:15); to preserve peace in the family (Romans 12:18).

Here are some strategies for being one in marriage:

1. GOOD COMMUNICATION:

The lack of good communication between the husband and wife gives rise to misinterpretations. Good communication fosters trust and enables the couple to feel close, even when they aren't together in the same place.

2. AVOID BEING POSSESSIVE:

A married couple belongs to each other. They should be faithful and trusting. There is a freedom to be oneself in marriage. Each spouse must realize that they don't possess their partner. Often through insecurity, the husband or wife has an unrealistic fear of losing the partner. There must not be any abuse or insane competition.

3. ACCEPT THE IN-LAWS:

When a couple get married, they receive the blessing of their parents. In some ways, two families have been united. In marriage, each spouse becomes a member of the other partner's family while still being part of their own one. Each family may have very different history and customs, and this can cause friction. They need to understand and accept the differences in each family, and work towards harmony and coexistence between both families.

4. AVOID USING LANGUAGE WHICH CAN HURT EACH OTHER

The golden rule teaches to “do to others what you would have them do to you” (Matthew 7:12). The couple must learn to express what they like and don't like in a way that doesn't hurt or insult the other. Words such as "stupid, silly, trash" or other insults used for one's enemies should be avoided. No matter how angry they are, they should not use insulting vocabulary which can be very hurtful. It is better to wait until everything has calmed down. Marriages can break up for trivial things.

5. GET INVOLVED IN A MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH:

It's important that both work together in a ministry, but if they don't have the same gifts, each one must work in their specific area. It's good to keep busy ministering with one another for the Lord. If for any reason one of them has to spend extra time away from home, both

already know that they are engaged in the work of the Lord. The danger of only one becoming active in the church is that the other one may resent time spent at church feeling that he or she is being neglected. This needs to be kept in balance.

6. AVOID HAVING AN INCORRECT SELF IMAGE:

In marriage, an incorrect self-image can lead a person to be critical, distrustful, jealous, and insecure. These people do things around the house to get attention. They are overprotective of their husband/wife and children. They can be dominant, possessive, aggressive, critical, and closed to reason. Each spouse needs to get to know themselves, recognizing their strengths and weaknesses. By the grace of God, we can change, and those weaknesses can become strengths (Psalm 139:13-15). What does it mean to be created in the image of God?

CONCLUSION:

Love in marriage is the clearest picture we have of the love of Christ for his church. This is a wonderful mystery; in marriage we learn how God loves us. Through our experience with God's love, we learn how to live in marriage (Ephesians 5:31-32).

If we are Christians, we are also redeemed by the blood of Christ and have forgiveness of sin according to the richness of His grace (Ephesians 1:7-8).

To discuss in class:

- Why do we say that in marriage a couple becomes one flesh?
- Why do both men and women want to push their own agendas in marriage?
- Why do some people keep their assets separate when they marry?
- Why are there so many divorces and in-fighting?
- Why do some couples treat their children as if they were objects?

LESSON 5 - JEALOUSY IN MARRIAGE

TEXT: PROVERBS 6:34-35

INTRODUCTION:

Jealousy is an emotion felt by one who perceives that another person gives a third party something that he wants for himself (usually attention, love or affection). Jealousy can lead to frustration, hatred or anger as the jealous person observes another enjoy an advantage that they don't have, or something that they would like very much to have for themselves.

Jealousy can be defined as an anxious emotional state that people experience and which is characterized by a fear of the possibility of losing what they possess, would like to have, or feel they ought to have, such as love, power, or professional or social image, among others.

I. JEALOUSY IS CARNAL (Galatians 5:19-20).

Jealousy is a work of the flesh. A person who is continually jealous is neglecting their spiritual life.

II. HOW TO DEAL WITH JEALOUSY

Jealousy is a feeling of fear and anxiety about the possibility, certain or imagined, of losing something that a person considers to be his (Proverbs 6:34-35). The jealous person is afraid of being abandoned, which is why they don't want to share their spouse's attention with other people. Here are some tips for people suffering from this problem:

- a. **Have a continuous dialogue:** Don't imagine stories. If you listen to a conversation or see something that seems suspicious, talk it over calmly so as not to exasperate your partner. Trust them to tell you the truth. Communicate which behaviors bother you, and make arrangements with your partner on how to handle them in the future.
- b. **Don't react violently:** How you react to what they say will influence the degree of truthfulness they use when they respond to your doubts. Listen, be objective and put yourself in the other's place, so you can be more just in your conclusions.
- c. **Accept the character of your spouse:** Recognize and pray that God will make the necessary changes in your partner. Leave it to Him rather than try to change your partner yourself.
- d. **Be loving:** Ask your Heavenly Father to fill you with His love so you can be loving and accommodating and make the other person happy.
- e. **Forgive past events:** If at any point your spouse has disappointed you, give them a new opportunity and forget the past. To forgive is to forget the offenses (Matthew 4:23).
- f. **Trust in God and not just in your spouse:** God has control of all things, so don't be afraid, and pray for faithfulness for both of you.
- g. **Have a renewed mind:** Whenever thoughts of mistrust come to your mind, ask God to change your thinking. Read the Bible to be transformed by the love of Jesus Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 12:1-2).
- h. **Go to a good counselor:** Seek an impartial counselor who knows the Word of God and stands up for the institution of marriage.
- i. **Don't be unreasonable:** As far as it is possible, don't do what bothers your partner. Dialogue and reach agreements that benefit both of you.

- j. **Be self-controlled:** Respond with love to questions and doubts. Don't show disgust, sarcasm, or rudeness. These attitudes will only aggravate the situation.

CONCLUSION:

Jealousy violates one of the most important pillars of marriage ... trust. It brings suffering to the one who is jealous because they presume that their partner is deceiving them, while the spouse suffers feelings of being controlled, persecuted, censured and overwhelmed. With jealousy, sincere communication is broken. It can lead to abuse and violence. Couples stop loving each other, and in the process, destroying the joy and harmony of a happy marriage.

LESSON 6 - HOW TO LOOK AFTER AND KEEP YOUR MARRIAGE

TEXT: SONG OF SOLOMON 1:7-17; EPHESIANS 5:21-25

INTRODUCTION:

Christian marriage is the union of a man and a woman who become one physically, emotionally and spiritually, each living for the other and both for God. We know that God instituted marriage, and that He has a plan for it to succeed until death separates them. Here are some tips which couples can take into account which can help them stay together. These suggestions are like means of grace that can strengthen their marriage.

Ten steps to a successful marriage:

1. **As a couple, maintain Christian disciplines.**
 - a. Go to church together.
 - b. Pray together.
 - c. Read the Bible, discuss it, and apply it together.
2. **Make efforts to spend time together.**
 - a. Go out together for lunch or dinner.
 - b. Take up a hobby together.
 - c. Go to the park or do recreational activities together.
3. **Express praise of appreciation to your partner and to others about your partner.**
 - a. Tell them how beautiful/handsome they look.
 - b. Thank them for being a good mother or father of the children.
 - c. Talk about what they do that is so amazing. Brag on them.
4. **Avoid social meetings with the opposite sex.**
 - a. Don't go out to eat alone with your boss if they are of the opposite gender then you. The same with a work colleague or friend
 - b. Avoid doing field work alone with someone of the opposite sex.
5. **Avoid making comparisons with attractive people.**
 - a. What a handsome man!
 - b. What a beautiful woman!
6. **If your marriage is not going well, how could you use the past as a basis for everything to go well again?**
 - a. Remember the honeymoon.
 - b. The sexual relationship during the first 5 months.
7. **Successful marriage is formed on a solid foundation "unconditional love".**
8. **The word "love" must become real in how we act, with patience and kindness that is cultivated by mutual affection (1 Corinthians 13:4-8).**

9. Be good stewards: Don't be a consumerist.

- a. Lack of money or poor use of money can lead to marriage failure.
- b. Wesleyan Principle: Work as much as you can, save as much as you can, share as much as you can.

10. Share the work of the home with your partner.

Sharing together the work of the home shows appreciation for what your spouse does. It shows consideration.

11. Enjoy pleasure as a couple.

- a. Daily attentions
- b. Doing things that both enjoy
- c. Good sex

Conclusion:

Successful marriage, keeping the flame of love burning, is cultivated day by day, taking into account all the ten steps we have learned about in this study. Take care and preserve your marriage forever.

LESSON 7 - TRIALS AND PERSEVERANCE IN MARRIAGE

TEXT: JAMES 1:1-4

INTRODUCTION:

Jewish Christians were suffering persecution. Some of them had to flee from their own nation to follow Jesus. Others, like Stephen, were killed because of their faith in Jesus.

James, Jesus' half-brother, guided by the power of the Holy Spirit, gave wise advice to each believer on their Christian pilgrimage (v.1). Here is some of the counsel that James suggests for those who are living through trials:

I. "CONSIDER IT PURE JOY...WHENEVER YOU FACE TRIALS OF MANY KINDS" (v. 2).

- a. The natural human reaction to trials is not 'pure joy.' As God's children, we need to learn to face trials with responsibility without losing the joy of our salvation.
- b. How we react to trials will show the quality of our Christian experience.
- c. James 1:3 says that "the testing of your faith produces perseverance." Christians must learn to bear up under the pressure of the trials, without losing their joy, until God, in His own time, helps us to resolve the problem.

The apostle Paul said, "That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10).

What are the results of having great joy?

II. "SO THAT YOU MAY BE MATURE AND COMPLETE, NOT LACKING ANYTHING" (V.4).

- a. Trials that we have to go through enable us to have a deeper relationship with God and a greater trust in Christ, qualities that in turn produce maturity, stability and godliness. 1 Peter 5:10 says, "And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast."

Married couples may well have to face difficult situations, but it is these moments when the couple must resist, remain firm, strong, sustained in prayer, without losing joy or grumbling. Remember what happened when the people murmured in Moses' day...snakes came out of the middle of the desert (Numbers 21:6). We must learn how to make the most in each difficult situation, strengthening our marriage, maturing and placing our marriage even more firmly on the rock that is Christ.

- b. The Greek word *holokleros* – translated 'complete' means, complete in every part, i.e. perfectly sound (in body) -- entire, whole. Paul said, "In Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority" (Colossians 2:10). What more do we want!

The adverse situations that marriages go through serve to perfect us ... to complete. We need to persevere in the trials. God will fill us with His Spirit and help us reach complete maturity. When we accepted Him as our savior, we recognized his complete work on our behalf. He also wants to make us perfect and complete in our marriage. In other words, the tests and trials polish us and make us strong in the Lord.

CONCLUSION:

Married couples have to face difficult situations. These often occur through differences in temperament, incompatibility or bad communication problems, when each one thinks they are right and won't give in, among others. These can give rise to serious and hurtful arguments, sometimes leading to violence and separation. But as Christians, we don't want that; it is not in our best interest.

Husband and Wife, through the words of James, the Lord today counsels us to have great joy and firmness in trials, remembering that through patience, we will reach maturity. Pray with unwavering faith without hesitation and put your hope in the Sovereign God who supplies our needs and resolves difficult situations.

LESSON 8 - GOD WILL RENEW HIS WONDERFUL WORK IN MARRIAGE

TEXT: HABAKKUK 3:2

INTRODUCTION

Husband and wife, in this lesson we want you to learn as partners that sin brings fatal consequences and breaks the marriage bonds, bringing as a consequence the suffering in the hearts of children who don't understand the problems of their parents. Even though the father blames the mother, or the mother blames the father, the children's love is for both, and they don't understand why their parents are fighting.

The majority of marital problems are due to infidelity in the couple, i.e., adultery and fornication because they give themselves to someone other than their wife or husband. In addition, jealousies, selfishness, and other causes encourage the breakdown of marriages.

In this lesson, we will learn that Habakkuk was restless and worried about the adverse circumstances that the people of Israel were going through. Sin prevailed: iniquity, destruction, violence, disputes, idolatry and weakening faith. (Habakkuk 1:1-4)

What should we know? Don't the same things happen in marriage?

I. ONLY GOD CAN CHANGE MANKIND AND COUPLES.

- a. Habakkuk complained to God, "How long, LORD, must I call for help, but you don't listen?" (Hab. 1:2)
- b. How long will these people not change?
- c. When will these people be holy?
- d. How long will there be violence?
- e. How long until they stop committing adultery, fornicating and sinning?

Isn't this the claim of every pastor today, seeing the broken marriages, abandoned children, violence in homes, and people embracing sin and evil to satisfy their carnal desires?

II. THE FAITH AND HOPE IN GOD THAT TRANSFORMS (Hab. 3:2)

- a. Oh Jehovah, I heard your word and I was afraid.
- b. O Jehovah, fan your work into flame in the midst of our times and make it known.
- c. Habakkuk understood that the Word of God can do a transforming work in the minds and hearts of every human being and every couple.

"I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh." (Ezekiel 11:19)

III. HABAKKUK RECOGNIZED THE REMEDY FOR HIS PEOPLE (Hab. 3:17-18)

- a. Habakkuk had carried out his mission to share the news that sin brings fatal consequences. He knew that sin brings destruction to the soul, destroys marriages, and brings terrible ruin.
- b. In the end, Habakkuk wanted to please the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. If his people would acknowledge that they had sinned and turn to Jehovah, then they would see fruit and be restored. Jehovah would be their strength.

CONCLUSION:

Husband and wife, you are responsible for your soul, and you will give an account before the court of Jesus Christ. You are responsible for the suffering you cause your children and others when you are guilty of the destruction of your marriage. You will hear either, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" (Matthew 25:23) or "Away from me, all you evildoers!" (Luke 13:26-28)

What answer do you want to hear as a couple?

Our prayer as Marriage Ministry remains the same: change the heart, transform sinful thinking and revive your work in these times ...

LESSON 9 - WHAT PARENTS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THEIR CHILDREN

TEXT: MARK 10:13-16

INTRODUCTION

There are three important reasons that the scriptures teach us to take seriously our responsibility for the children God has entrusted us with as a couple, because they are an inheritance from the Lord. We must give an account to Him of how we fulfill our duties as parents to educate, provide, protect, and love His most valuable treasures. In the book of Mark, we find a verse that teaches us the importance that children have for God:

1. THE IMPORTANCE OF CHILDREN TO GOD

“People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, ‘Let the little children come to me, and don’t hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who won’t receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.’ And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them.” (Mark 10:13-16)

In ancient times, children, like women, were not given much importance. That was one of the reasons why the disciples were the first to oppose the mothers who were bringing their children to Jesus to give them his blessing. But Jesus immediately told them not to stop them because the kingdom of heaven was prepared for them. I like to use the example of children to illustrate the Kingdom of Heaven, because they have the following qualities:

- a. They are humble.
- b. They are sincere.
- c. They easily forget offenses.
- d. They are forgiving.
- e. They are loving.
- f. They are trusting.
- g. They are diligent.
- h. They are compassionate, collaborative, and creative.

All of these qualities make them living examples that we as parents can imitate. For that reason, Jesus said that if we don’t become like children, we won’t enter the Kingdom of Heaven. (Matt. 18:3)

II. CHILDREN MUST BE RECEIVED AND ATTENDED TO

“And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.” (Matthew 18:5) This biblical text is guiding couples to comply with what God commands. We understand that God is blessed when children are specially cared for, given spiritual guidance within the home, taught the Biblical principles so that they rely on the truth, and grow up loving God. These are the responsibilities of every parent ... the Lord loves it when we do his will.

III. GOD WARNS ABOUT THE NEGLECT OF CHILDREN

The following biblical text indicates the rights that children have and the duties that we must fulfill for them. This helps us understand the value and importance that children have in God’s eyes. It warns us not to be stumbling blocks for children, to not be careless or neglectful towards children in all areas, and to do all we can to assure that their rights as God’s children are not violated.

"If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea." (Matthew 18:6)

We are responsible for sharing the message of salvation to children at a young age. Satan is trying to gain advantage over Christians of all ages, and our children are especially susceptible to deception. Satan does all he can to get them to participate in harmful groups, teaching them to kill (physically and/o emotionally), steal and destroy, the same work as satan. For this reason, there is a warning for us to teach the way of God to children and adolescents at an early age to prevent them from falling into the hands of the enemy.

IV. WHAT MUST PARENTS DO?

The Church of the Nazarene sees the great importance of children. Through training in our Children's Ministries and in our homes, our children can learn and serve at an early age, just as Hannah did with Samuel when she prepared him to serve the Lord as a child. (1 Samuel 1:28)

There is much that children can do for the Lord. They can learn to share the gospel with other children, disciple other children, and motivate others to participate in church activities. This must be a reminder to us that we must prepare them and involve them in a practical service within the congregation, even at a young age. How wonderful it would be to have your children start by serving alongside you as you serve!

The prophet Jeremiah wanted to excuse himself from doing a ministry entrusted to him by God by saying that he could not speak because he was a child. However, God replied, "Don't say, 'I am too young.' You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you" (Jeremiah 1:4-8). This helps us understand that children can even do adult ministry in their service; they can exercise a ministry within congregations at an early age.

As parents, we should be interested in:

1. Discovering their skills and spiritual gifts to know in which areas they can work.
2. Training them for service through biblical studies and discipleship.
3. Assigning small responsibilities within the congregation for them to start helping and developing their gifts and abilities.
4. Motivating them to serve the Lord by serving others.
5. Monitoring their development and progress in the Christian life.
6. Helping them grow mentally, physically, emotionally, spiritually and socially (Luke 2:52).

CONCLUSION:

I conclude that children and adolescents must be held in high esteem because they are important to God. From the moment of conception, God is interested in them ... they are his creations. That is why the Psalmist David said, "Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be." (Psalm 139:16)

God had reason to choose David, Jeremiah and all the others that he chose in his infinite mercy, because they had special qualities to put into practice in the ministry He entrusted to them. As Jehovah said to Jeremiah: "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations" (Jeremiah 1:5). In the same way, we should also have greater interest in children and adolescents because they are special to God.

And we as parents must also be like children to see the glory of God.

LESSON 10 - SITUATIONS OF VIOLENCE, AND CARE FOR THE CHILDREN OF DIVORCED PARENTS

Text: 1 Corinthians 7:14

INTRODUCTION:

It is believed that in Christianity, divorces don't exist because marriages are well established and stable since they are blessed by God at the time of the ceremony. However, statistics say otherwise. Sadly at the time of marriage, some couples don't know each other very well, or both parties are not truly committed to a life-long marriage. Then come the mistakes and problems and bad choices, etc. that destabilize the marriage union.

One of the results of these disintegrating marriages is that there are children who are immersed in this problem and suffer in the following ways:

1. When Jesus is not the center of the family and marriage, there are disagreements that gradually come to be harmful and poisonous, which provoke constant discussion and conflict. Children see and hear the daily arguments and disputes between their parents. To a certain degree, they come to a point where they want to act as arbitrators to intercede between their parents. However because of their age, they cannot, and that generates problems in the children's minds and emotionally affects their hearts.
2. Sadly, there are churches that don't have a stable program of premarital and/or marital ministries that can help couples prepare for marriage and help them deal with the ongoing difficulties of marriage. Rather, they limit themselves more to devotional sermons for the whole congregation, basically ignoring this problem that especially affects the children and families of the church.
3. In ancient times, the infidelity of women or dissatisfaction of men brought great problems for the women, because they were thrown out of the houses, or were punished with death, leaving the children completely vulnerable. This still happens in some places today.
4. On the other hand, some families are separated because they don't profess the same religion. This causes damage to the children because they are separated by the religious differences.
5. In the New Testament, Paul argues that Christian women should not divorce, unless their husbands leave them (1 Corinthians 7:12-16). The situation was complicated in the Greco-Roman period when some wives wanted to follow Christianity, but their husbands did not. Paul advised them that for that reason, the husband was sanctified by the wife or vice versa. The reason was to prevent the children from suffering for the sake of the gospel and to maintain family harmony.
6. At present, Pastors and leaders must play an important role in families in crisis and to help prevent families from being in crisis. They should be present and attentive to the children of parents who are in the process of divorce. Their physical proximity will be a comfort to the children. Through a hug and a visit, we can help them understand that they are loved by us and the Lord.
7. The other problem that causes havoc in children is the abandonment by one or both of their parents. Children don't primarily want clothes, visits from time to time, or a monthly payment, but a close relationship, support and guidance from their parents.

CONCLUSION:

With the aforementioned, I conclude that we need a well-designed program to prevent our children from suffering. This program of premarital and post-marriage counseling will help people be aware that marriage is until death separates them. This will help children grow up emotionally healthy and stable for their integral development.

Note: Let this ministry exist urgently in every local church. Let's promote this Marriage Ministry because it is a blessing to families.

With Love in Christ.

Sister Evi de Cruz

For more resources on Marriage and Family Ministries, go to:

www.SdmiResources.MesoamericaRegion.org and click on the down arrow on the green tab "Resources For SDMI Ministries" and choose "Marriage and Family Ministries." There are resources there that you can download or order.

To download the Manual for Marriage Ministries, go to:

<http://www.mesoamericaregion.org/en/package/sdmi-ministry-manuals/>