

Fundamentals For Fractured Families

(This series of lessons was compiled by Paul R. Blake from multiple sources and many teachers over a period of thirty years. The compiler is very grateful for their wisdom. Developed in part from a sermon preached by Bill Cavender in Tomlinson Run, PA in 1985, and from Paul Earnhart in Barnesville, OH in 1986.)

Introduction:

- A. I have heard hundreds of jokes about divorce over the years, and some were rather hilarious.
 - 1. Gotten to the point where they are not funny anymore.
 - 2. Seen too many lives destroyed by divorce; too many people I care about ruin their chances for happiness in this life.
 - 3. Come to me asking, "What can I do now?"
 - a. Change what God has said on divorce and remarriage?
 - b. Deceive people about what is written?
- B. How does one fix a family before it fractures?
 - 1. Teach prevention before marriage
 - 2. Teach reconciliation before divorce

Part One: PREVENTING DIVORCE BEFORE MARRIAGE

- A. The dating process is a time to select a mate for life.
 - 1. For life is the operative word here - *Rom. 7:2-3; Matt. 19:9*.
 - 2. There are no exceptions to God's rule. Absolutely essential to select someone that will work a lifetime with you to make the marriage last.
 - 3. Any marriage can work if both work at it. If you marry someone you can live with, not someone you can't live without.
- B. The nearly impossible task of being objective at a time of raging hormones, fear of the future, and impossible dreams of living happily ever after.
 - 1. There are tell tale signs of danger that must be seen during the dating process, but the young do not see them.
 - 2. "We can live on love." Love and nothing else will soon be nothing else.
 - 3. "A match made in heaven, no one has ever felt this way before. When we get married, then life will be perfect."
 - 4. And soon after the honeymoon is over, the dream comes crashing down and reality sets in.
- C. Discover that eyes were closed to the serious problems that mate had before the marriage.
 - 1. First, try to reform him; tremendous source of argument and conflict
 - 2. Second, attempt to live with it; the problem grows and tolerance shrinks
 - 3. Third, get a divorce on the grounds of incompatibility and set self up for regrets and unhappiness for a lifetime.
 - 4. Fourth, go to the preacher and see if it is possible to fix the divorce after the fact so that you can remarry.
- D. How can this be avoided?
 - 1. By being careful in selecting a lifetime mate!
 - 2. I'm not down on marriage. Next to becoming child of God, marrying

Coral was the best thing that ever happened in my life.

3. I just want you to set yourself up for a joyful life both here and eternally

Look at a short list of danger signs:

I. UNBELIEVER

A. Much debate over what the Bible teaches on this matter.

1. "Good, then I can marry a non-member."
2. Whatever the outcome of the debate, marrying an unbeliever is extremely unwise and the cause of many Christians going to hell.
3. The few who are still faithful, and the rare person who converted his spouse are the exception, not the rule.
4. Many gamble to be the exception.
5. Three people very thirsty walking through a dry region, come to a table with three glasses of water and a sign that reads, "Two of these glasses have poison, two of you will die if you drink." Would you drink?
6. Two out of three Christians who marry outside of the church fall away within five years and lose their souls.
7. We won't risk our lives for water in the desert, but we will gamble away our eternal soul for long eyelashes or big biceps.

B. What would a couple have in common if they cannot discuss:

1. Worship, the church, Jesus Christ, Bible studies, eternity, rearing godly children, contribution, beliefs and values?
2. Young men, time and gravity is going to make that beauty queen wrinkle and sag; and all of the cold cream in the world won't stop it.
3. Young ladies, those muscles turn to pot belly on married food; and that sports car turns into an economy station wagon when the babies and bills start coming in.
4. If that is what you marry for, what will hold the marriage together when those things are gone?
5. "BEING HEIRS TOGETHER OF THE GRACE OF LIFE" - *1Peter 3:7*
6. Marry someone who will help settle you in the faith, not undermine it

II. UNTRUSTWORTHY

A. If they lie to you before marriage, it will get worse afterward.

1. There can be no true relationship based on falsehood.
2. Constant fear over faithfulness to vows.
3. Break it off before the "I do."

III. HOT TEMPERED

A. If he hits you before the marriage, or cusses you, or throws a fit, it will get worse when problems arise in marriage. You will be beaten.

1. Spousal abuse is not scriptural grounds for divorce.
2. You cannot reform a bully.

B. Young men, if she is argumentative, high-tempered, bossy, or pouts to get her way, it will get worse after you get married.

1. The time to get a divorce is before you get married.

IV. SUBSTANCE ABUSER

- A. Drinking and drugs not only destroy the abuser, it ruins his family as well.
 - 1. Prominent causes of divorce, wife beating, child abuse, infidelity, financial problems.
 - 2. Do not hope to reform him or her; less than 5% of abusers ever reform

V. UNCHASTE

- A. If your date or fiancée insists on premarital sex, that's a danger signal.
 - 1. Chances are they will not be satisfied with you after the marriage.
 - 2. Don't believe the lie that it will only make them love you more; you are being used.
 - 3. When you do not wait, you commit fornication, deceive parents, lose your honor and self-respect, risk disease and pregnancy, and are never the same physically or emotionally again.
- B. If he won't wait, he can walk.

VI. MATERIALISTIC

- A. Spendthrifts and poor providers make lousy mates.
 - 1. Money and stuff will not make happiness, but godliness and contentment will - *1Tim. 6:6*.
 - 2. Many couples start out with too much. Go in debt for nearly everything.
 - 3. He gets laid off, she gets pregnant, and the house of cards comes tumbling down.
- B. If he or she can only focus on things and stuff, walk away.
 - 1. Materialism will lead to a divorce.

VII. DISRESPECTFUL

- A. If they show contempt for you, your family, or background, it is a danger sign.
 - 1. If he or she is continually breaking up with you and later making up, it is a danger sign.
 - 2. Faithful Christians deserve respect from their mates, male or female.
- B. If your date or fiancée doesn't respect you, it will only get worse after "I do."

Part Two: PREVENTING DIVORCE AFTER MARRIAGE

Introduction:

- A. "But we are already married, and it seems like we fight all of the time. What do we do now?!"
 - 1. Fight nice
- B. Marriage is the building of two people into a relationship of one.
 - 1. Two people bring into the relationship differing backgrounds, attitudes, interests and seek to mold them into "one flesh"
 - 2. This process of adjustment is sometimes difficult.
 - a. Bible doesn't teach that when a husband and wife differ, he is to get his way; nor does it teach that he must always defer to his wife to prove his love.

- b. "We'll compromise; let's do it my way!"
 - c. There is no "I gave my 50%, now she has to give hers."
 - d. Both must put in 100% in order to make it work; work is the key.
 - e. The fairy tale always ends when the honeymoon is over.
- C. Disagreements are inevitable within a marriage.
 - 1. The couple with a perfect marriage just get a divorce last week. No one warned them about upcoming disagreements.
 - 2. How we treat one another when disagreeing in marriage can determine our eternal destiny. *Peter 3:7*.
- D. Often a marriage is judged by the number of arguments.
 - 1. Linus telling Charlie Brown in a Peanuts cartoon: "I was just trying to talk to the little girl up the street... but I couldn't say a word... I just stood there all embarrassed and confused. I got so self-conscious, I didn't know what to do... so I hit her."
 - a. The ability and willingness to communicate with one's spouse is the answer to disagreements in marriage.
 - 2. We tend to think that a marriage with arguments is a bad one, but many marriages are happy with the disagreements ongoing.
 - 3. Arguments should not be viewed as tragedies, but as opportunities.
 - 4. Married people need to learn how to disagree without being destructive.
- E. Important to understand anger.
 - 1. We think it is a bad thing to be angry.
 - 2. Reality is that it is a natural part of growth:
 - a. When you have motion or growth, you will have friction.
 - 3. God often grew angry; Christ was moved by anger (*Mark 3:5*); God said there was a time to be angry (*Ecc. 3*)
 - a. And He told us how to deal with anger.
 - b. *Psalms 4:4* - "Be angry and do not sin."
 - c. *Eph. 4:26* - "Be angry and do not sin."
 - 4. The question is... What will we do with our anger?
 - 5. Let us use the scriptures to show us how to disagree with our mates in a productive way.

I. GET A GRIP ON YOURSELF - RULE #1

- A. Anger is natural, but just like all emotions, we control them, not they us.
 - 1. Being filled with anger is like intoxication.
 - 2. Better to reduce the emotional state before discussion.
 - a. *Proverbs 29:20, 17:27*
 - 3. Much can be accomplished if we take the time necessary to get in control of our anger before speaking
 - a. Go somewhere and pray to God first; tell Him about the situation.
 - b. It will invoke His help, it will calm you down and it will help you better focus on the real problem.
 - 4. If you argue when in a high state of anger, things are likely to get worse.
 - 5. If you calm down first, you may realize that it wasn't as bad as imagined and decide to drop it.

II. CONFRONT THE CORRECT CREATURE - RULE #2

- A. It is important to express our concerns to the person we are really angry with and not some innocent party.
 - 1. This is often done to avoid confrontation.
 - a. Angry with boss, come home and dump on wife and kids.
 - b. Afraid to be angry with the right person, feeds anger all out of proportion, and we dump it on someone we are not afraid of.
 - c. Cruel and allows a person to escape the real issue.
 - d. Terrible that the ones we take it out on are innocent and are in turn hurt and frustrated; pass it on...
 - 2. Home is not a dumping station for our frustrations.
- B. Have the courage to speak the truth in love to the right party.
 - 1. *Proverbs 3:30*

III. CONCENTRATE ON THE CORRECT CONFLICT - RULE #3

- A. Many arguments are fought over the wrong matters.
 - 1. Husband may criticize his wife's housekeeping, when it is the money he thinks was wasted at the mall.
 - 2. Wife criticizes husband for going hunting, when the real problem is that he hasn't taken her anywhere in a long time.
 - 3. Need to ask ourselves, "Is this really what is bothering me?"
- B. *Proverbs 15:7*
- C. People avoid the real issues because of the risk involved.
 - 1. Fear of embarrassment, rejection, being laughed at.
 - 2. Do not be afraid of expressing yourself to your mate.
 - 3. In a kind and understanding manner, tell your spouse what is on your mind; making certain it is the right thing.

IV. TEST YOUR TIMING - RULE #4

- A. Need to both agree that the time is right.
 - 1. There are some times when discussions should not be held:
 - a. In front of company or in public.
 - b. When there is not sufficient time... before services, work, a dinner party, etc.
 - c. Right when your spouse comes home from work.
 - 1) 80% of marital fights happen between 4-6 PM.
 - 2. "What if he never wants to talk?"
 - a. Then you will have to initiate the discussion, but use good judgment in selecting the time and place.
- B. *Proverbs 25:8*

V. PASS THE PAST - RULE #5

- A. THAT IS A LOSER'S TACTIC
 - 1. There are some things never to be forgotten, but past forgiven sins aren't among them.

2. Once a disagreement has been resolved, it is to be buried never again to be resurrected.
 3. When you bring up items that your spouse thought resolved, it breeds distrust into the relationship.
 4. Usually an attempt to shift blame away from yourself.
- B. *Proverbs 26:27*
1. *Eph. 5:25* - Would Christ do that to His Church?

VI. NO NASTY NAMES - RULE #6

- A. There is no justification for hurling insults or profane names at anyone, let alone loved ones.
1. Thoughtless names, labels and gouges puncture deep and are often remembered for years.
 - a. Husbands - calling attention to her weight, hair, driving, housekeeping, cooking, in an argument will solve nothing and will add animosity.
 - b. Wives - calling him lazy, stupid, jerk or pig won't accomplish anything except to widen the gap between you.
- B. Three reasons why personal attacks are so destructive in a marriage:
1. It throws one off of the subject.
 2. Focuses attention on the person rather than the problem.
 3. Damages the relationship by ruining mutual respect.
- C. *Proverbs 21:23, 26:4*
- D. Three suggestions I
1. Attack the problem, not the person; look for a solution rather than trying to affix blame to someone.
 2. Lower your voice one octave and your decibel level by 50%.
 3. Avoid "you" statements and replace them with "I" statements.
 - a. Instead of "you lazy bum", try "I feel you're not working as hard as you could."
 - b. Do not use the words "always" and "never" in an argument.
 - c. *Philippians 2:2-5*

VII. RETIRE RESOLVED - RULE #7

- A. Some save up grievances like green stamps; wait until later and cash them all in at once.
1. Pressure cooker syndrome.
 2. This breaks the first five rules.
 3. Deal with one thing at a time, when it comes.
- B. One should not allow difficulties in a marriage to build to the point of an explosion.
1. A couple who does not communicate, is not and will not be happy.
Face this FACT!!!
 2. If we are communicating as mates ought to, most disagreements will not occur and will not escalate into warfare.

- C. When one allows grievances to build up and then unloads on his spouse, several harmful things happen.
 - 1. The spouse is overwhelmed by all of this at once having has no idea it was being kept in store.
 - 2. One's mate discovers that true feelings were not being revealed earlier.
 - 3. Breeds a lack of trust and confidence in the marriage.
- D. *Proverbs 10:18, 15:23*

VIII. DON'T DOMINATE THE DISCUSSION - RULE #8

- A. "I've said all there is to say; end of discussion!"
 - 1. Three things wrong with that:
 - a. You don't have the right to speak and demand silence from your mate, man or woman.
 - b. Christians don't act that way.
 - c. Fairness demands that we carefully listen to the other.
- B. *Proverbs 18:13, 17*

Conclusion:

- A. Mature partners realize that there will be differences and that it is not wrong to disagree.
 - 1. Discuss these rules, study your Bible and most importantly, live what it says. Make your marriage work.
- B. Marriage run God's way can be a little bit of heaven on earth.
 - 1. Have a positive disposition toward your mate.
 - 2. Be sure that your solution isn't selfish, but is best for both of you.
 - 3. Take your share of the responsibility and blame.
 - 4. Don't damage your spouses self-image.
 - 5. Learn the art of peacemaking.
 - 6. Don't be demanding or give ultimatums.
 - 7. Forgive and forget.
 - 8. Don't manipulate or use unfair means to get your way; fight nice!
- C. *Peter 3:7*