

Before You Say I Do: Session 1

By Mark Lee

Mark Lee

All right. Now, all of you should have a copy of the 50 questions. 50 questions. We will be using these Monday through Friday. We will simply proceed as far as we can go for each one of the sessions, and then the next day pick up with wherever we left off. I have a book on these questions got around. They were published in various books and magazines, and as a result, Christian Harold Publishers asked me to write on the questions. So I have written about four or five pages on each one of these questions before you in a book entitled how to have a Good Marriage. We stopped by the bookstore on our way over, and they don't have any. But it just happened that I have some in my car, and I don't know how they got there, but what I'll do is get those into the bookstore.

And if you're flushed with Christmas money, get them. The profits on these books go to poor children, my own. So if you're interested at all, they'll be oh, I don't know. I have a box of them, about 50 or 60 in a box or something like that. You'll be able to get them at the bookstore. It'll take us a little time to get them in there after the session, but they ought to be in there somewhere along the line.

Now what do we do? We've got an overhead, but we'll need equipment, et cetera. Well, we'll let that go for this morning. I don't have anything to write with, but we'll get back to it. All right.

Nothing like being right ready. If you'll take the questions, we'll start with number one. It's a very simple approach and work our way through them. Now, I suppose we ought to welcome friends and others.

Does everyone have a set of the questions? Does everyone have a set of the questions? Well, we'll just let that go and we'll work it out for tomorrow morning. I'm sorry. We don't have everything quite together, but it will be.

If you have your Bibles turn to Matthew 19, when you're dealing with matters of marriage. We have enough people coming in now, late somehow. We need to make sure you get copies of these questions. Should we put some in the back, right on the floor, and then perhaps they'll see them. Those of you who have just come in, you need a set of the questions. 50 questions. Raise your hand if you don't have any.

Two passages in the New Testament. I consider the primary passages on marriage and the family. Ephesians five, beginning with verse 21 through the end of the chapter. Verse 33 is, in my opinion, the key doctrinal statement in all of the New Testament about the meaning of marriage.

The second passage on marriage, which is the applicable, is the one that Jesus gave in Matthew 19. In Matthew 19, he received some questions and he responds to these questions. The Pharisees came to him verse three, testing him and saying, Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause at all? And Jesus responds, have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female? Genesis five, two.

In other words, in the beginning, he made them not males and males, not females and females, but he made them male and female. And he called their name Adam. That's an important perception. The generic name man, no matter what the liberationists have to say, is still applicable and is a biblical concept. He made them male and female and called their name Adam. That is to say, call them man. Verse five. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife, and they too shall become one flesh. Now that would have blown the

minds of those ancient Jews who were so convinced of the superiority of the male, and they were also very much convinced of the superiority of their parental families. For example, when Samson was challenged, his response was, my mother and father don't know, so certainly my wife will not know.

In other words, if Samson didn't tell his mother and father, he certainly would not have told his wife. That's the point to be made. Now, Jesus shocks them by pointing out that a man will leave his mother and father, which was absolutely unthinkable for them. He will leave his mother and father and be joined to his wife, and they too shall become one flesh. To these ancient Jews, this is a striking bit of information, a bit of information that is almost more than they can bear.

Consequently, they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore, God hath joined together? Let no man separate. They said to him, why then did Moses command to give her a certificate and divorce her? He said to them, Because of the hardness of your heart, Moses permitted you to divorce your wives.

But from the beginning it has not been this way. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality and marries another woman, commits adultery. The disciples said to him, if the relationship of the man with his wife is like this, it is better not to marry. In other words, even the disciples are willing to say that if that is how big marriage is, and if you're going to actually be compelled on occasion to turn your back on your own parents and be joined to your wife, then why should I get married? Why should we get married?

This is too much. You see, Jesus is giving them a larger perception of marriage than they have ever had before. And so they say, well, if it's going to be that much, if we're going to have to make that kind of sacrifice, perhaps we would not marry. And Jesus answered, not all men can accept this statement. Only those to whom it has been given.

In other words, only those who are strong enough to perceive God's concept of marriage will want to marry. And then he responds, for there are eunuchs. And of course, that could be translated, there are single people who were born that way from their mother's womb. In other words, you were born in such a way that your natural affinity might not be toward marriage. And there are single people who were made single people by men. In any one of a number of ways, which might be an operation, it might be psychologically so or some such thing. And there are also single people who made themselves single for the sake of the Kingdom of heaven. The Apostle Paul was such a one. All you have to do is read first Corinthians and especially in Nine, and the Apostle Paul says, I have a right to lead around a wife as Peter does. I can just see Peter leading her around.

And yet he decides not to do that for the Kingdom of heaven's sake. I am quite convinced that what Jesus is saying is that not all people should be married. You see, the ancient Jews believed that it was a commandment to be married. You didn't have a choice to remain single. You had to be married. And in fact, if you did not marry, oftentimes they would refer ultimately to the synagogue and the synagogue would arrange a marriage.

One of the traditions about Joseph and Mary is that it was arranged by the synagogue, and that's the reason why she ends up with a husband. According to the tradition, we don't have the solid evidence. The reason why she ends up with a husband who's very much older than she is, Joseph in this case Mary being about 15 or 16 years of age, undoubtedly, Joseph is old enough to be her father and ends up being her husband.

Part of this is the traditional belief that Mary didn't really want to marry, but for her security and a marriage was arranged and the arrangement included Joseph, whom we know about who was married to her. And then Jesus ends verse twelve, he who is able to accept this, let him accept it.

In other words, Jesus is giving us a theory of marriage which is Christian. He's giving us a theory of marriage which is going to put a burden on people to work out God's will for their marriage.

And therefore, we want to talk a bit about that. Now, we've still had dear friend, a number of people who've just come in. Are there questions back there that they can pick up? What we'll do is to take and what? Put them back by the door? Would you raise your hand if you need a set of questions? Those of you need any questions. Okay. All right. Let's turn to question one again.

We have 50 questions.

We have five mornings, and it's going to be a job to get through now, nevertheless, it is terribly important to me that you interrupt at any time. And by the way, we're going to see to it those of you who are frozen that we get that changed. It was set at 70, but it's gone to 58 and we'll try to make it so that those of you who perish by tomorrow, we know that you got a cold.

Yeah. Poor people. Okay. Now, number one, permit me to give you a preliminary to this. The tradition of the College where I am is that the students come in and they set up appointments with my Secretary.

She will give to the young lady a copy of the questions and to the young man a copy of the questions. Then they're instructed to go out and he is to answer all the questions by himself. She's to answer all the questions by herself. Then they're to come together and compare their answers with each other. And when they finish those answers, then they come to me.

We spend anywhere from three to 5 hours on alternate occasions, not more than an hour at a time. We spend from three to 5 hours in working through those questions. As we go through the questions, certain things begin to turn up and then they have to do any one of a number of other things. For example, let's say that it's shown that they're going to have a problem in this area. So

then they are given certain books that they have to read, tapes to listen to, films to see, tests to take.

Everyone has to take the Taylor Johnson temperament analysis test. There's a whole series of things they have to do. The point to be made is, and this is what gives us such confidence, we don't have anyone that's gone all the way through the 50 questions, all the way through the counseling, all the way through the materials that have been signed to them and later got married and broken up. We don't have any record of anyone that's gone all the way through.

We've lost track of some, but maybe they're the ones I'm glad to have lost track of so I can say what I'm saying. But as far as we know, we haven't lost a couple who have seriously gone through. Now, it is true that we cut off about a third of the couples before they got through. In other words, the response is there's no reason for us to believe from the evidence available that you two are going to be matched.

There's no reason for us to believe from the evidence available that you're going to make it. And therefore, I don't want you to have the illusion that going through this is going to accomplish its purpose. Yes.

How long have we been doing it? A little over something? Well, in one form or another. Been doing it for about 20 years in one form or another. But this form that you have it before, you've been the last ten years. But we took the first ten years to try to perfect that as we went along.

Right. So you understand how it's being done. Now let's take question number one. How extensively have you talked about the issues which arise after marriage?

And then, by the way, for each one of these, I asked them to read certain passages of scripture as I took you into Matthew 19. They start with Matthew 19 because with Matthew 19, Jesus is giving his primary perception of what Christian marriage is going to be about. So I start by

asking them what they know about marriage. First of all, I asked them, do you really believe that you have the resources, the gift of being single. Now the gift of being single is referred to, for example, in first Corinthians seven.

First Corinthians seven is the chapter for single people. I try to get those people who come to me to work their way through First Corinthian seven, it's a relatively long chapter, I try to get them to work through first Corinthian seven and then ask them a series of questions based on first Corinthian seven, whether or not they have the resources to be single people. Now one of the problems that you face when you face marriage is the expectations.

If a person doesn't get married, the assumption is that he is not important enough to a significant other person. I think that's unfortunate. I think it's unfortunate that an individual perceives his own worth only if he is able she is able to get a mate. It's obvious to me from not only scripture but Church history that this is not really necessary. It's not necessary to be married.

It's not necessarily true that you'll be fulfilled if you're married. In fact, a great many people are more fulfilled by being single than being married. Jesus gives us the Apostle Paul, inspired by the Spirit, of course, gives us in first Corinthians seven, the two concepts. And by the way, when you go all the way through life, you'll discover that God almost always gives you options. You can either have the option to go this direction or this direction.

The greatest option of all either is I can accept his son or reject his son. The one option leads in one direction. The other option leads in the other direction. The same thing is true with marriage, I have the option. Now you say, well, then, who should be married and who should not? I think what you ought to do is go through first Corinthians seven. If you can find your fulfillment, as the Apostle Paul did, in direct service to God and find ways of doing that, then by all means that individual should remain single.

I am a married person. I've been married. I'm in my 38th year. I find myself serving God by serving my family. In other words, the relationship that I hold with my wife. If I follow first Corinthians seven correctly, the relationship that I hold with my wife, if that relationship is proper, is a means whereby I worship God. In other words, the practice of the Christian virtues with my wife says something about how I am worshiping God. But the Apostle Paul says, you can drop off that one and go direct in your worship, as the Apostle Paul did. In fact, most of the quote Saints that even Protestants will accept are persons who probably lived a single life.

The Apostle Paul was single. Certainly Jesus was single. Someone says, oh, but Jesus getting married, that sounds a little bit weird. And the answer is, why would that be so weird? If it were weird for Jesus to marry, then what we're really saying is that there's something a little bit wrong about our being married. If the only way that you can live a totally Holy life is by being single, then many of us must be second class Christians because we have married.

Now, by the way, the Church for centuries believed that, you understand that? So that if you would remain single and you were a male, you'd become a priest and you take the vows of celibacy, or if you were a female, you become a nun and take the vows of celibacy. Now the Protestant Church came along and turned that around so that now the superior life. By the way, I don't think one is superior to the other. It's whatever gift God has given you, says the Apostle Paul.

And he says that in first Corinthians seven seven, one has a gift after this matter and another a gift after that. One of our problems is that we often think that because there are lists of gifts, that those are the only gifts of the Holy Spirit. One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit has to do with how you live as a single or how you live as a married person. And the Holy Spirit gives you the gift to

live as a married person if indeed you seek that gift, or he gives you a gift to live as a single person, if indeed you seek that gift.

Marriage has never been more popular with all of the criticisms of marriage, marriage has never been more popular than it is right now. At the turn of this century, roughly about 20% of the people did not marry. Now fewer than 10% do not marry. Much of the Western part of the United States was settled by single people, mostly men. Whole Villages, If you read any of Brett Hart and Mark Twain, whole villages were constructed almost entirely of men.

If you know the story of Luck of Roaring Camp, the only women in that camp were a couple of Indian women finally won, and she died on the birth of a child whose father was of uncertain origin. And you have the story of the whole camp because it was made up of all of these men, essentially single men, or they had run away from their families. Formerly, if you didn't want to live with your family, you just ran away. Now we have a quick divorce to achieve the same purpose. Family has always been a problem in this sense, simply because we have not perceived that both of these, as certainly as Christians, have not perceived that both of these are totally legitimate and totally fulfilling. If the gift of the Holy Spirit is given to that individual either for marriage or for single life, yes. [Audience member speaking]

Audience Member

Is it for us to be single or is it for us to be married?

Mark Lee

Every individual must decide for himself whether or not God's purpose for him is to be single, or God's purpose for him is to be married.

Audience Member

Why would he create male and female in the beginning of Genesis?

Mark Lee

Well, of course, the male lived for a time. We don't know how long all by himself. I suppose originally what God was saying to Adam was that you will find me enough. But Adam observed the world before him and the world before him. He saw Mr. Hippopotamus had Mrs. Hippopotamus, and he had a feeling that it wouldn't be too bad if he had Mrs. Man, so to speak. There's reason to believe, as you follow this through. People say that beforehand Adam did not know what it was to have a partner in the sense of having a wife. I think he did. I think he did because he observed the whole business of nature.

And in the observation of nature, he wanted to be a part of that nature. And therefore, God saw that as long as he was a part of that nature and it was not good for him to be alone, then he fulfilled man with woman. And we need to understand that. The perception that we need to understand is that God gives us options. He does not drive us down one road and only one road. And by the way, if we didn't have those options, there'd be some problem in understanding our basic freedom as human beings. So you have the option of marriage or nonmarriage. Well, someone comes along and says, oh, but this commonly happens in the evangelical Church. But it's so unnatural not to be married. What's unnatural about it?

I've never met a born married person. Every one of us were born single, and we will live a long time, the single life. We will, then again, be single if we're bereaved or divorced or separated or something. God certainly has a way for single people to live. And even if you marry, you've got to learn, in my opinion, the victory of being single.

If I should lose my wife and one of us will probably proceed the other. Am I going to be abnormal on the death of my wife, or is she going to be abnormal on my death? We need to understand that God has given the two options. And even if you choose the option of marriage, you must also learn the secret of successful living as a single individual. By the way, dear

friends, I meet and talk with more married people who wish they were single than single people who wish they were married.

Sometimes we get the idea that somehow this business of being single is simply temporary. And somewhere along the line, this is going to be changed when we get married. I am quite convinced that one fifth of the people I meet, nearly one fifth of the people I meet would be more fulfilled as single individuals than married. Now, I think I'm a good one to say that because marriage is great for me. I like it. I have four children, all adults, and six grandchildren. And when you have children, you're not always sure that that was the best thing to do until the grandchildren come, and then it was all worth it. Yeah, it's great to be a grandparents. What you have to go through to become one that gets you into difficult.

All right. I wish to pursue that if you wish to pursue it, and that is the total legitimacy, the spiritual experience of being a single individual. And this is what the Apostles Paul is talking about. And if I were you, I would master one Corinthians seven. I have gone through too many tragedies of people who got married because Mother pushed her into it. What's wrong with you, honey?

An unclean blessing. And she says, what do I say in a case like that? I said, just quietly and humbly say, none of your business, and then go about the business of living. Someone who is enormously pressured by sexual desire. I take that as one of the evidence. If they are enormously pressured and they do not gain control over that, I take that as a significant evidence that this individual perhaps ought to think in the terms of marriage.

Now, the reaction I get from evangelical Christians. Oh, no, don't make sex that big. Well, who's making it that big? Why do you make it any smaller than it is? You already know that if you're normal, that's one of the big battles of your life, the whole of your life.

One of the problems is we try to sweep the whole subject under the rug and never realize that that may be the most significant evidence that God gives us, that we need two people to fulfill our lives, male and female. And if I had total control over my life in that sense, I suppose I would perceive myself as not requiring that kind of intimacy, in which case I look seriously at whether or not I ought to live a single life. Now, any questions before we go on? In my opinion, this is utterly crucial. In fact, in this book that I suggested how to have a good marriage. It's somewhere. Yes.

The first 50 pages are entirely devoted to the arguments for remaining single. The first 50 pages. And I think you're going to be happier in your marriage if you go through it and say, hey, I know that that's not going to be my gift, but rather this one. I am absolutely persuaded I shouldn't use the word absolutely. I'm nearly, absolutely persuaded that anyone that can find an intimate partner sexually can find a mate.

So this whole business of free and easy sex, I think, is pure nonsense. And we could no, it's not pure nonsense. It's impure nonsense. We ought to take a sharp look at it. We'll get to that later on in the questions.

Now, I hope you will interrupt me and ask the questions as we go because those are the sharpest ones. Those by far and away are the best. Yes.

Audience Member

Most people, when they're married, they would prefer to be single.

Mark Lee

No, I didn't say that. I says the people I counsel, I counsel more people who are married who wish they were single than single people who wish they were married.

Audience Member

Were they believers or are they?

Mark Lee

A lot of them believers. The biggest problem we have in the evangelical Church today is the breakup of a home. That's the biggest problem we've got right now.

Audience Member

Why is that happening?

Mark Lee

Well, I think that believers have been so widely influenced by a carnal world, probably reflected in the media. In other words, wherever I go, I've lived long enough. I'm 58 years of age. I

became a Christian two days before my 17th birthday. So I've been a Christian for 41 years.

When I was a young Christian, it was quite clear because up to 17, I had lived pretty well in the world and did all the things a kid would do. Up through that time. I was a senior in high school.

There was quite a demarcation between an evangelical Christian and an evangelical Christian community and a non Christian community. Boy that was as clear as could be today.

I don't see that at all. I just don't see it at all. I go in a Christian community and they sometimes tell the same jokes. They're even drinking, et cetera. I have a lot of evangelical Collegians who are arguing, hey, can't we go social drinking?

At that time, we thought it was pretty clear what was of the world and what was of God. And someone say, well, what's the change? Aren't people as good or as bad as they were? And the answer is, of course, they're the same. The difference is that for the most part, you and I not so much myself being older, but the younger generation has been without their knowledge, really influenced by the media.

And by the way, we have enough tests to show that this is true. You've been so influenced by the media that all of a sudden someone made a study 50 years ago and discovered that if your parents were evangelical and your mates parents were evangelical, the likelihood of you getting a divorce was one in 1126 couples. And today it's the biggest problem we face in the Church. You see, I think the Church has been enormously influenced by a Carnival society because it just pours in on us day after day after day through the media. Well, we'll get to that and talk about it, but it's something that makes it very much more difficult for you than for me, very much more difficult.

When I was a kid at West High School in Akron, Ohio, one of my buddies was thrown out of school because he sneaked to smoke a half mile away at Five Points, he was expelled from a public school. Today they just help you hold still until you get out on the play yard to get pot. It's quite a difference. When I was a kid, I might have wanted some pornography because of the Perian interest in an individual, but you couldn't get it. Today, you see, you can go down to any drugstore or any place where they sell magazines and get the biggest trash that would ever be available, even the most secret place when I was growing up.

I truly feel for you because all of the goodies are out there, and you're going to have to be stronger than we were, frankly. I mean that in all honesty, you're going to have to be stronger than we were because we wanted to, but we couldn't, you see, and you want to and you can. It's simply a matter of whether or not you have the resources is the integrity to do that.

All right. Let's start with number one. How extensively have you talked about the issues which arise after marriage? Most of the students I talked to have only talked about three or four matters.

One, invariably sex, two, perhaps money. That's just about as far as they've gone. They do not talk about what more education they are going to get. They do not talk about the living conditions they're going to go through. They do not even talk about the management of money. And so the problem that I face as I work with many Christian youth as they look toward marriage is that they don't get down and really deal with the issues one after another. And they are many. And you'll be surprised to discover what some of those chief issues are. But we'll talk about, number two, what books have you read on marriage? Most of the persons have read books which really don't amount to that much.

Some of them are fine books. I won't deny that. For example, I will not diminish Walter Trobis's books, but he is talking about a kind of idealism without the application of certain practical elements that you must review. There are at least a dozen different books. And by the way, I give them in a bibliography, just some of them.

There are many that need to be encountered. But one of the things I've discovered and here's where I sometimes drop couples right on the first day or more likely the second day, they'll come back and I'll say to him, now, have you done your reading in this area, this area, this area? He says, no, I haven't. And I says, well, that's it.

If you don't care enough about the young woman, almost always it's a fellow that doesn't do his homework. If you don't care enough about her to do that work, then why should I care that much about you as a couple to spend my hours with you? I always give them the time. I never charged for it. Why should I give I have only a desire for your happiness and the success of your marriage and its Ministry to Christ.

And then almost always they apologize, go out, get the job done, and then they come back and start in again. But it's simply a matter of making sure that you have covered the whole waterfront

when it comes to the issues that you're going to face in marriage. Number three, are you Christians? More and more, especially, Christian women are turning to fellows who either may not be Christians or they are so inferior in their Christian experience to her that it's virtually the same as marrying a non Christian. He doesn't have that kind of dedication.

And she already knows that according to statistics, for every what, three Christian women there will only be available two Christian males. So when it's three to two and running about that way and has run that way for about the last 15 years or so, you can be sure that if you're determined to be married, you're going to accept something that comes along that may be less than your ideal. And if that happens to you ladies, you'll find someone later having to help you pick up the pieces. Now, I must be honest, and the evidence shows that if both he and she are Christians, the likelihood of success in their marriage is seven out of ten. That is to say, they're going to stay together.

Seven out of ten couples, by the way, it used to be, as I said, so much better than that. But now it has decayed that far. But if one of them is a Christian and the other is not a Christian, the percentage is higher than if neither of them is Christian. Now I used to think the opposite used to think if both of them were nonchristian and both of them were Christian, they were going to have better marriages than if one of them was a Christian and one of them is not. But the evidence doesn't show that.

The evidence shows that even though there's going to be an enormous amount of unhappiness, especially for the Christian member of the family, that if one of them is a Christian and one is not, the likelihood of that marriage staying together is greater than if both of them are not Christians. Now, I think that gives you faint hope. Don't run on that. But I've got to be honest with you. The research shows that to be true.

And I've recorded that research. If you're interested in Creative Christian Marriage, which is another book in which I have put a lot of the statistics about what happens to Christians, nonchristians or those who are in mixed marriages. By mixed marriages in this case, I mean, one of them is Christian and one of them is nonchristian. So I want to know if they're Christians, if they are not Christian, if they are not both Christians, I make it clear that if they would expect me to unite them in marriage, I will not do it. I will not unite in marriage a Christian to a nonchristian. Now, when two nonchristians come to me and they say we want this counseling, I've got that coming up.

Now, my wife said that someone called while I was in Canada this last week and I have agreed to talk to them. But what I say to them is you have to give me an hour to present the claims of Christ. If I present the claims of Christ to you and you're willing to listen to that, then I will take you through the pre marriage counseling. If one of you is a Christian and one of you is not, I don't care what you do, I would not unite you in marriage. That's simply my stand.

I'm grateful that I took it at one time. I thought that may be a little bit stern. Whenever people in your Church, this is the hardest part here. You've got a member of your Church. They've been there for a long time.

They rely on you. You are the one that is the person that cares for them. And then they come and they want you to perform the wedding for their daughter. Their daughter is marrying someone. You can't approve that he's not a Christian. He's not going to contribute to her life and all of the value system that means everything to her. And so you find yourself in a bind. And I almost gave in once or twice. And then since then, I've discovered that it was simply wise to make the decision that if I were going to unite people together in marriage, I was not going to unite

someone unequally yoking with another person. So you've got to settle on whether or not you're both Christians and some of you are going to settle for too little.

And may I say the tragedy is there. And what I tell these people oftentimes, if they insist on going on, is I'll be there to help you pick up the pieces. Yes, sir. [Audience member speaking, Inaudible] No, I list them in the order in which they not in the order of importance, but in sequence. In other words, these are the things that I need to know before getting to the things that they need to know. See I need to know how much they've talked about marriage. I need to know what books they've read, if any. I need to know if they are Christians.

Now, I carry that over and show how important it is to them, but I don't know where to start in my counseling until I've gotten some of these answers. Oh, I certainly do. Yes. I would take them in this order. Yes. Now, later on you could shift the order later on, but you'll discover that the first ones are in order, and certainly the last ones are in order because the last question has to do with whether or not you've got your wedding planned.

Yes. Your major concern might be, are we Christian? But sometimes that's too stark for them. I start out and number three is terribly important, but I start out letting them know I'm interested and I want to know what they've done. And by the way, if I find out one's a Christian and one's not a Christian, I'm not going to give up on them.

I'm not going to give up on them. But I tell them when I get down a few more questions, I tell them now I never want to be a part of anyone breaking up. God has called me to heal, not to break. And therefore, if you do not both commit yourselves to Christ, I don't want to finish the counseling. I tell them I don't want to finish it.

And I have actually gotten down to the 49th question. And I said, I'm not even going to ask you the 50th question. He said, Why not? Because I don't think you're going to make it. And I don't

want to ever have to say that I finished the whole counseling with someone I don't think is going to make it.

That's one of the reasons why I was able to give you those initial statistics of great success, because by the time I spent three, four, 5 hours with them, then I can pretty well tell if they're going to make it. By the way, the prediction of counselors about what's going to happen to a marriage has a very high rate of success. Counselors predict very well what's going to happen. Someone evaluated that and showed only about a 3% error in that kind of prediction by a certain set of counselors. So I think there's a high level of prediction about whether or not this couple is going to make it after spending some time with them counseling.

Okay. Number four, is there any impediment to this marriage? This is a question that I would not have asked 20 years ago. Now we have to ask the question, is there any impediment to the marriage? Because about half of the couples that I counsel now, evangelical Christians, almost all of my counseling on premarriage counseling with evangelical Christians. Almost half of them have problems that, if the other person knew, might affect the marriage. I'll give you a couple of these so you get a feel for what I'm talking about.

Here was this young couple sitting in front of me. She was a beautiful young woman. She had all of these marvelous ideals. She had gone through school and was very, very popular in high school. And a number of fellows had tried to nail her. She constantly had the idea and told her mother that she was going to save herself for her husband, because that's one thing you can only give away once. Your virginity can only be given away once. And there's something absolutely marvelous about the fact that this person saved this gift of self to give to that other self with whom that person is going to share life. And it was beautiful, just beautiful to hear her tell it.

So I looked over to the fellow and I said, now you've heard that. Is there any skeleton in your closet? Now, don't think that I'm trying to find out for myself, because you don't have to tell me anything. You may want to go and tell her privately, or you may not want to tell it because you think it's over and done with and it'll never come out again. And I says, I'm not for going to the closet, opening closet, and dragging out all the skeletons, but I am concerned about this. If there's something in your life that if she knew and she may find out, if you don't tell her that when she finds out may put a cloud on your relationship, you better tell her.

Well, it was obvious that because of the way he was, hesitating it was obvious something was there. And so he says, all right. He says, I lived in Florida and I was drafted and was being sent to Vietnam. I was keeping company with this young lady, and we were married. Now here's a young fellow planning for the Ministry. Nobody knows except certain members of his family. And he decided after I said that that she's going to find out someday. I may as well tell her. I was married four days after I was married. I was sent to the West Coast and on to Vietnam.

We had a passionate four days together. After I was in Vietnam, I began getting letters from her and what she was telling about the fellow she was dating and things she was doing. And then she divorced me and married somebody else. I came back. He says. I felt badly enough. I came back, and then I became a Christian. And now I'm here at your College, and I want to marry her. When you can imagine, here is a person with a story utterly pure, and here's a person with a story that has a huge mistake in it. Now, what are you going to do?

She looked at me and says, What I'll I do? I said, well, that's your decision. I can't answer that. I can't answer that. That's your decision. She says, well, if you were me, what would you do? And I said, Well, I think I'd go and talk to my parents because your parents are ultimately going to find it out. And she says, well, what will my parents do? And I happen to know her parents. I

said, they're not going to like it, but I have a hunch what they're going to do is to pray about it, think about it. And when they know all of the details that I know, they probably are going to say forgive him.

And he's got to forgive himself. And I asked him if he had forgiven himself. And he said, oh, yes, he had a long time before. And I said, are you ready to take the results? He says, Should I take the results of her parents?

I said, Well, I'm a parent of four children. And I said, I didn't rear those children so that when they got to be 18 years of age, I no longer was interested at all in their lives. I says, I would really take them into my confidence if I were you. Well, he did. And everything worked out beautifully. They're married. They have a beautiful child.

Another couple, they were sitting there and I said, is there anything that would bring an impediment to this marriage? And then I always have to explain that because there are so many things that go wrong in these days. She says, I think so, but he doesn't know it.

And I said, what is it? She says, well, for a year or so I was on this drug at that time, and it hasn't been proven contrary even since then. But there's a little relief in the evidence. At that time. The particular drug she was taking was believed to have a residue in the body, and it's still believed by many to be true have a residue in the body even after you quit the drug, so that if you had a child, there's a chance that the child will be deformed.

I mean, there are certain drugs you take which if, by the way, it can be even as simple as aspirin on some occasions. My daughter Sharon has two children. She was told not to take aspirin for a headache during the time she's carrying those children because of the effect of aspirin on her body, which would affect the fetus. And I saw my daughter suffer two or three days in a row

with headaches rather than to threaten the life of her baby. And there she got two beautiful baby children to prove it.

So you can imagine what happens when someone goes on hard drugs, the effect on their body, which in turn affects the fetus. And so the man looked at her, the young man who was in love with her and wanted to marry her. He looked at her and she looked back and they didn't say anything. And of course, I'm the third party in the room. And I said to him, does that threaten you?

He threatened me in what way? I said, does it frighten you that if she becomes pregnant as your wife, that you're afraid that that child might be born deformed? He said, yes, it does. And I says, if that frightens you to that degree, there's nothing that I can find that would suggest that you two ought to be married.

Well, they ultimately worked it out. I don't know what's happened to them since, but they ultimately did get married. My understanding was that they were going to check and double check before they did anything about having children. And it troubled me a little bit because they kept open the option of abortion if they could find any reason why the child would be deformed. I work with another couple, and she has a blood disease that killed her brother. I'm trying to think of the name of it. It's a very common one. And if she has a child, that child will have a blood disease and probably will die before his 21st birthday. Therefore, she and her husband worked the whole thing out, or she and the young man is going to be her husband worked it out. They got married. They've been married now for 12 13 years, and they are determined never to have children. In other words, you've got some huge decisions to make in our time because of the kind of effect on your life, on your body as it relates to the possibility of children or anything else.

Another young man in Florida, when she revealed herself, simply, said, by the way, they attended a College very much like Biola, met there, fell in love and decided they wanted to get married, sat down and began to talk. And is there anything that if he knows, is there anything she knows might change his marriage? And she then said, I have an incurable disease. I'm not supposed to live. He says, I love you and I'll marry you, and I want that time together. They did marry. She did die. He is now going through a terrible, terrible time.

He was unwilling they were unwilling to go through the kind of counseling necessary so that when he lost his beloved and he dearly loved her, that he was prepared, he's now dropped out of the Ministry. I have a friend in Florida who has hired him in a secular job, and there are people working with him to try to get his feet back on the ground. In other words, he married her, and he had an enormous belief that God would heal her and that this wouldn't happen. But it did happen just as she predicted, just exactly as she predicted. In other words, dear friends, what you have to do is to deal with the issues beforehand.

Every decision that's made before your marriage is ten times stronger than the decision afterwards. After you get married, you are forced to decision to say, hey, I'm married, I can't get out of it. But if you decide in advance, you tend to live with your commitment. If you decide in advance and that's what we're after. All right, I'm going to let you go now.

Tomorrow morning, same time and we'll get out of Alaska and back into Southern California. Any of you need the questions, be sure and pick them up. There's extra here for your friends if you wish.