

WOUNDED MARRIAGES CAN BE HEALED

When love is gone, approximately half of all married couples get a divorce. This shocking statistic indicates that there is a serious problem with the way people behave in relationships. As Katherine Porter states in her essay "The Necessary Enemy," "they intend in all good faith to spend their lives together, to have children and do well after by them and each other" (Porter 361), Why then, do so many good people just give up on all their hopes and dreams? Why do they come to the point where divorce seems like the only way to a happier life? The answers to these questions are probably as numerous as the number of couples experiencing a marital breakup. From looking at the statistics, it would appear that the choice for reconciliation is not very popular in our day. A thousand voices will seek to allure you to the supposed happiness of divorce and remarriage (Chapman 88), It is possible, however, for these problems to be worked out; provided that one or both partners want a reconciliation to occur. In order to have any chance of success, it will be extremely important to accept the to problem, find ways to grow personally and 'develop a relationship with your spouse.

When there are unresolved problems in a marriage, it will only be a matter of time until either the husband or the wife decides that he or she has had enough. Instinctively, the one who is being left will try to do everything possible to fight for an immediate reunion. Sometimes, this tactic will

work but it is unlikely to bring any lasting results. This is exactly the reason why there was a breakup in the first place. Getting back together too soon will undoubtedly prove to be the wrong thing to do. The problems won't get solved and the cycle of an unsatisfying relationship will start all over again. Therefore, it is best to accept what is happening and use this time to discover the reasons why you failed your mate. Gary Chapman says, "Separation is not the time to capitulate. The battle for marital unity is not over until the death certificate is signed" (Chapman 12).

Being apart allows the individual an opportunity to experience personal growth. Self-improvement will not only serve to increase respect from your spouse, but respect of from yourself as well. This is the ideal time to examine the strengths and weaknesses of your personality. Separation alleviates the pressure that accompanies a troubled relationship, hence, it allows you more time and freedom to concentrate on the root causes of the problems and increases your chances of resolving them. Contrary to popular belief, personality can be changed. With the help of a counselor, you will be able to identify your personality patterns and find ways to develop the areas that are deficient. Perhaps you have feelings of inferiority, where you tend to focus on your weak points and your failures. At the other extreme, you may feel superior to everyone else and the problem in your marriage, for instance, are definitely the fault of your spouse. Which ever category you happen to fall in, it is

important to come to understand yourself, develop yourself and accept yourself. If you do, your chances of reconciliation are significantly increased. Concentrate on small, attainable goals at first. Do not look at the rest of your life as one great unknown. Make plans for today. What can you do today that will be constructive? As you fill your days with meaningful activity, hope for the future will grow. (Chapman 38)

Finally, after doing some much needed work on yourself, you will now be able to develop a relationship with your spouse that is more meaningful than you ever dreamed could be possible. Begin by making a list of your failures; write them down being as specific as possible. Show the list to your spouse and ask for his/her forgiveness (Chapman 56). Call your mate every so often and ask if there is anything you could do to help meet his/her needs. If you don't, somebody else will. This is the perfect opportunity to show that you are capable of demonstrating kind and unselfish acts of love toward your husband or wife. There is a story in Gary Chapman's book about a woman who went to a marriage counselor and confided that she wanted to divorce her husband. I want to hurt him in the worst possible way," she said. "What do you suggest?" The counselor replied, "start showering him with compliments. When he thinks you love him devotedly, then start the divorce action. That's the way to hurt him most. She returned in two months to report that she had followed his advice. "Good," said the counselor, "now is the time to file for divorce." "Divorce!" cried the woman. "Never! I've fallen in love with the guy!" (Chapman 63), With this attitude

you will begin to develop a new understanding of each other and as a result, respect and the warm feelings of affection will gradually return. Husbands, take your wives out to a dinner and your wives could maybe invite your husbands over for a home-cooked meal. Don't expect all the problems to just melt after such an evening (Chapman 91). You are, however, well on your way in the right direction.

It is the responsibility of both partners to seek reconciliation even though you may not feel like it. Having admitted that you are partly to blame is the first step in acknowledging and therefore accepting that this problem will not just go away. Prompt action in seeking ways to improve yourself will make you more satisfied in growing as a person and will cause your spouse to see you as more desirable to be with. Once an understanding of yourself is under way, it is now possible to begin developing a relationship with your spouse that has in it a new understanding of each other. Separation is not necessarily the beginning of the end. It may only be the beginning (Chapman 11). With the ever-increasing number of couples choosing the road that takes them through divorce court, it would appear to be the right way to go. I maintain my opinion, which has been reinforced by reading Gary Chapman's book, that with hope and the help of God, wounded marriages can be healed. Wouldn't it be nice to bring your dreams back to life?

Works Consulted

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