

The Twelve Bridges, Class #6C

Love and Relationships, Part C: MARRIAGE AND RELATIONSHIPS

Theme and Purpose

To help the students grasp the responsibilities of marriage and other long-term relationships, and to keep relationships and sexual activity in their proper place.

Publications to offer

- [Optional]Love Stories from the Heart (CLTP No.45)
- [Optional]Any of the "Flirty Fishing: The Inside Story" testimonies. Your students might be interested in reading these as they're fascinating!)

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Teaching Tips

- Important!—Please see the counsel in the “Teacher’s Tips” for Class 6B, as that counsel also applies to this class.
- The three classes in this Bridge are very much interlinked and built upon each other. You should not teach class C until you have taught both classes A and B.
- The supplementary reading in the Study Notes for this class is divided into two main sections. The first part on “loving interaction” would apply to all students and they should all read it. The latter part is concerning marriage. Although it is recommended that all students read this, whether they are in a permanent relationship or not, it is obviously more intended for those who are married.
- Further class for married students: The basic functions and concept of marriage are explained in this class. For students who are married or living in some type of long-term relationship, it would be helpful to look in more depth at the qualities of a successful marriage. You can do this by holding another class, using the above mentioned “marriage” material in the Study Notes. Instead of leaving them to read the Study Notes on marriage by themselves, meet up again and use that material for another class, which you can simply read together, discussing it, as needed, as you go through it.

Introduction

So far we've talked in this Bridge about the Law of Love as a general principle, and as it applies to sexual relationships. Now we'll look more closely at what for many people is their primary personal relationship—marriage.

Part 1. Marriage—a union of love

➤ Marriage—originated by God to fulfill our needs

Genesis 2:18, 20-25—And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. (20) And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him. (21) And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; (22) And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made He a woman, and brought her unto the man. (23) And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. (24) Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. (25) And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

(Father David:) Marriage is more than sex or friendship or even a business partnership for the Lord's work! It is the most intimate, humbling, loving and self-sacrificial relationship between human beings in all of life. "No greater love hath any man than this: that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). This is love, real love, true love—the willingness of a husband to sacrifice himself for his wife, the eagerness of a wife to lay down her life for her husband! This is supernatural love, divine love, God's Love, more than human!

If you want to learn something about unselfishness, humility and sharing, just get married! Marriage is a very humbling thing. That's one reason it's real good for you to get married: It humbles you and knocks some of that damn pride out of you!—'Cause the Lord knows you don't need it! Otherwise you can be independent and you can do as you please.

(Mop, Marriage:86, 13 and ML #259:21)

➤ God has ordained and blessed marriage

(Jesus:) The benefits of marriage are endless! Marriage multiplies love, and since I am Love, marriage multiplies and magnifies Me in the lives of the people involved and their children, which often result from such love. As those who are married are fruitful and multiply, they fill the world with My children, little messengers of love from Heaven. Marriage keeps people together and provides a good team for raising children.

(ML #3194:4)

(Father David:) For thousands of years the family has been the basic building block of society. If your families are good, your society's going to be good. But if your families fall apart, your society is going to fall apart. As I always say, "The family that prays together stays together," and in the societies where the family has stayed together, the society has stayed together and been much better.

(ML #2433:76)

Proverbs 5:18—Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth.

Proverbs 18:22—Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the Lord.

Matthew 19:4-5—And He answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that He which made them at the beginning made them male and female, (5) And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?

- Those who forbid to marry are in error
 - 1 Timothy 4:1-3—Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; (2) Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; (3) Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.*
- Even priests, bishops and church officials are advised to marry
 - 1 Corinthians 9:5—Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?*
 - 1 Timothy 3:2—A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach.*

➤ Divorce

- The ideal is that marriage be for life

(Father David:) Marriage is supposed to be for life, except for the most unusual circumstances! Everything humanly possible should be done to stick together, both for your sake as well as for the sake of the children and the work of God! So don't throw in the towel too soon!

If you can't get along with the mate you now have under almost any circumstances, how do you know you're going to be able to get along with the next one under almost any other circumstances? If you want to leave your mate simply because there is something about them you don't like, you're going to want to leave every mate you ever get, because there's bound to be something you don't like about each one.

(GT, Marriage: 80; Mop, Marriage:19, 58)

- Marriages should stick together as much as possible, but divorce is permissible when necessary. If partners can't resolve their differences over time and being together is having a bad effect on them, their children, and their service to the Lord, it can sometimes be better for them to separate than to stay together. In exceptional cases, the Lord may also specifically show two people to amicably part ways in order to achieve different goals for the Lord's service.

(Father David:) In most cases I would strongly advise parents with children to try to stick it out and survive without separation for the sake of the children. [But] the Lord is very reasonable and merciful and understanding and loving and kind, so that if two people simply do not want to live with each other He does not make rules to force them to do so, as man does.

It's a heart-breaking thing to do, it's a home-breaking thing to do, it's a terrible thing to have to do, but it's much worse to continue on in such terrible contention and dissension and argument and difference of opinion and difference of spirit and difference of goal and desires and differences in methods of training the children, differences in your desire to serve the Lord.

(Mop, Marriage:44, 42, 99)

- Conditions for divorce

(Father David:) If it be with the consent of both parties, divorce is possible and permissible with the understanding of possible remarriage to someone else. However, if either party objects to the divorce, it is strictly forbidden according to the Scriptures! It must be with mutual consent and uncontested, and it must be for the agreed reason that neither cares to live with the other any longer.

However, where children are involved, this should be avoided by all means if possible, unless there is a very good reason why the relationship is no longer good for the children themselves, where parental strife is a constant bad influence on the children or could even endanger their physical safety.

(ML #359:3-4, DB 6)

[Optional] Family policy regarding divorce

Couples are strongly encouraged to make their marriages work, especially if they have children. Divorce is permitted, however, after all efforts at reconciliation fail or the marriage is no longer viable. Couples are expected to part amicably and with mutual respect, and come to a mutually acceptable decision about the care and custody of the children. The preferences of the children are to be taken into consideration when these decisions are made.

A probationary separation period is suggested before divorce, to give couples time to reconsider. Temporary separations are usually handled informally within the Family, but where couples wish to dissolve their marriages, they are required to make out a notarized and/or statutory written agreement containing the details of the custody of the children, etc. It is up to both parties to decide if they wish to be legally divorced or not.

Legal battles seldom occur except in occasional circumstances where one parent decides to leave the Family and a custody agreement cannot be reached. Since our missionary lifestyle does not lend itself to individual Family members acquiring real estate or costly personal items, property disputes common in secular divorces are largely non-issues in the Family.

(From Statement "Women in the Family International")

- See also: Permanent Marital Separation Rules in the Love Charter

- ① *Encourage the students to read the full section on "Marriage and the Home" from Discovering Truth—Bible Basics. (This assignment is included in the Study Notes.)*

➤ Building a happy marriage

Ecclesiastes 9:9a—Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life.

Ecclesiastes 4:9—Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour.

- Take time to work on your marriage

(Maria:) You know, it takes a little time to construct a good marriage, a happy marriage, but it's going to have its rewards in a lot more peace, a lot more harmony, a lot less worry, a lot less emotional stress, a lot less problems—even a lot less health problems!

(ML #2504:17)

(Father David:) Success in marriage is much more than finding the right person!—It is a matter of being the right person.

Marriage should be as equal as possible, as sharing as possible. You should talk together, pray together, love together, discuss together and then decide and agree together.

One of the greatest assets to a good marriage is honesty, along with a sense of humor.

The most damaging thing that can happen in a marriage is to lose faith in each other, and worst of all faith in God.

(Mop, Marriage: 35, 82, 12, 129)

I've never heard anyone on their deathbed say, 'I wish I had spent more time with my business.'—Lee Iacocca

- In the Mosaic law, the Lord directed that a newly married couple were to spend much time together.

Deuteronomy 24:5— When a man hath taken a new wife, he shall not go out to war, neither shall he be charged with any business: but he shall be free at home one year, and shall cheer up his wife which he hath taken.

- The sexual aspect of marriage

(Father David:) Marriage is a sexual relationship, or else you could simply have stayed good friends! Marriage is a sharing of all things! It is the most satisfying, most strengthening, and most lasting relationship on this earth! You share the parts of your body as well as your thoughts!

(ML #123:36)

- Sex is just a portion of marriage

(Father David:) Married love is not just sex, affection, and romance! Although it is all of these, it must be more if it is to last and be an enduring relationship for the glory of God—an example of His own relationship with you! It must be a God-given love and a spirit of self-sacrifice in which each prefers the happiness of the other to his own! This is true love, the only kind that lasts!

Sex is really a very small part of a marriage—only about 2% or so. It's a very small portion compared to all the other factors that go into a marriage and into making it work.

To have real lasting enduring genuine love, it must be based upon a more enduring foundation than mere fleshly gratification. It must be an unselfish desire to protect and to help and to make someone else happy.

(ML #154:63; 3211:105; Mop, Marriage: 114)

- ① *The following anecdotes are some light-hearted yet insightful looks at marriage. You may like to read several of them.*

[Optional] What really matters

Carl was driving to work one morning when he bumped fenders with another motorist. Both cars stopped, and the woman driving the other car got out to survey the damage. She was distraught. It was her fault, she admitted, and hers was a new car—less than two days from the showroom. She dreaded facing her husband.

Carl was sympathetic, but he had to pursue the exchange of license and registration data. She reached into her glove compartment to retrieve the documents in an envelope.

On the first paper to tumble out, written in her husband's distinctive handwriting, were these words: "In case of accident, remember, Honey, it's you I love, not the car."

*—Adapted from Paul Harvey
(Reflections 83)*

[Optional] The wedding list

At her Golden Wedding celebration, my grandmother told guests the secret of her happy marriage: "On my wedding day. I decided to make a list of ten of my husband's faults which, for the sake of our marriage, I would overlook."

As the guests were leaving, a young lady whose marriage had recently been in difficulty asked my grandmother what some of the faults were that she had seen fit to overlook. Grandmother said, "To tell you the truth, my dear, I never did get around to listing them. But whenever my husband did something that made me hopping mad, I would say to myself, 'Lucky for him that's one of the ten!'"

(Good Thots, Marriage:1)

[Optional] The healing kiss

(Christian Daily News, quoting Susan Wales:)

I love the story of Mrs. Baumann from Cincinnati, Ohio. Her husband has a heart attack, and after he's stabilized [at the hospital] she goes to phone her seven children. After a long while, she returns to discover her "husband" has suffered a massive stroke. Overcome by emotion, she lifts his head off the pillow and gives him a big kiss on the lips, not

worrying about all the tubes and machines around him. When the doctor walks in, he yells, “Mrs. Baumann, what do you think you are doing?” She responds with, “The question is, what have you done to my husband? When I left to use the telephone, he was fine.” The doctor chuckles and says, “Mrs. Baumann, that is not your husband.” Her husband was resting comfortably across the hall. When her husband checked out a week later, the doctor teased her that both his patients recovered. Was it his doctoring or her kisses?

(END #30, pg.15)

[Optional] The loving compliment

Nearly every one of us is starving to be appreciated, to be the recipient of that most supreme compliment—that we are loved. We need others to recognize our strengths or sometimes just to prop us up in the places where we tend to lean a little. Honest compliments are simple and cost nothing to give, but we must not underestimate their worth.

The most loving compliment I've ever heard of was given by Joseph Choate, former ambassador to Great Britain. When asked who he would like to be if he could come back to Earth again after he died, he replied without an instant's hesitation, “Mrs. Choate's second husband.”

—Leo Buscaglia
(Reflections 83)

- ① *There is a variety of wonderful counsel on marriage in the Study Notes that accompany this class. Encourage the students to read this and/or you may want to read it together with them as a fourth class in this Bridge (as explained in the Teachers Tips above).*

Part 2. Marriage and sex

➤ “The bed undefiled”

As we studied in the previous class, sexual relations are a gift from God.

- Sex in marriage is pure and ordained of God
Hebrews 13:4—Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled.
Proverbs 5:18-19—Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth. (19) Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished always with her love.
- It was ordained for the procreation of the race
Genesis 1:27—So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them.
Jeremiah 29:6—Take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; that ye may be increased there, and not diminished.
- In marriage man and woman are joined as one flesh
Mark 10:6-8—But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. (7) For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; (8) And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh.
- Sex is a marital right, not to be used to punish or reward
1 Corinthians 7:3—Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence [marriage duty i.e. lovemaking]: and likewise also the wife unto the husband.
- Husbands should treat wives with honor and love not merely as sexual objects
1 Thessalonians 4:4—That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour.
(Extracts from *Word Basics, Marriage*)

[Optional] The Song of Solomon describes a loving sexual relationship

- their desire to be close together (1:2, 7, 13; 2:10, 14, 16, etc.)
- their mutual feelings of unworthiness of the other's love (1:5; 2:2)
- their desire to extol the other's virtues (1:8-10, 15-16; 2:3-4,8; 4:1-16; 5:10-16, etc.)
- their fruitful fragrant life together (4:11-16)
- their recognition of the headship of the husband (3:6-11)
- their desire to belong to one another (2:16; 6:3).

➤ Your marriage is the primary relationship

As has been made evident, sex outside of marriage is permissible providing the Law of Love is adhered to. However, for those already married, your marriage is your primary responsibility. If your mate feels abandoned or left out of your activities, then you need to focus on getting that rectified. You should not pursue another relationship to the detriment of your marriage.

(Father David:) The Lord is willing to do anything for you if you love and please Him.—So should you husbands be willing to do anything for your wives [and vice versa] if you love and want to please them! If a marriage goes on the rocks, the rocks are often in the bed!—So solve these sex problems as soon as you can, if you want a happy, healthful, contented and satisfying marriage. Remember: happiness is not found by pursuing it for yourself.—Happiness finds those who give it to others!—So do your best to make your mate happy, and you'll find this makes you happy too—if you really love, as God loves, unselfishly. Selfishness destroys any marriage. Try a little real love and unselfishness by the grace of God!—It works wonders! You are to try to please your mate, not just yourself, God says.—Try it!—You'll like it!

Real love is preferring the happiness of your mate to your own! "In honor preferring one another." This brings true happiness to all.—Including God!—Believe it or not, He wants you to be happy!—That's one reason He created sex and marriage, for your pleasure, enjoyment, satisfaction, companionship, fellowship, team work, sharing and children.

(ML #259:148-149)

(Father David:) Just because we have sexual freedom, it does not mean freedom from marriage. We have not abandoned marriage! I still believe in real old-fashioned love and falling in love and wanting to take care of somebody and help somebody and be their mate, be half of them, and have their children!—Those who take the responsibilities of marriage seriously, and consider that they should be loyal to each other, are loyal to each other, and don't have any idea of ever parting if they can help it.

(ML #2433:42, 64; 2455:103)

(Maria:) The Lord makes it clear that you have a lasting and serious commitment to your marriage partner. Part of that commitment is being willing to invest the time needed to keep your relationship loving, strong and unified. Even if you're involved in another love relationship, you are bound by the Lord to put your primary relationship, your marriage, first.

(ML #3210:58)

Part 3. Relationships in perspective

In the previous class, we talked about keeping our enjoyment of God's pleasures in perspective, by keeping Him in first place. Let's look at bit more at this in the context of personal relationships, including marriage. The principles to remember again are: Are these relationships glorifying God and good for His work? Are they good for others? Are they good for ourselves?

➤ God first!

- Our relationship with God and obedience to Him should have priority, even over family relationships.

God called Abraham to leave his family and homeland to go to a new location unknown to him.

Genesis 12:1-3—Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: (2) And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: (3) And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

Jesus also spoke of leaving loved ones behind when necessary:

Matthew 10:34-37—Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. (35) For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. (36) And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. (37) He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.

Matthew 19:29—And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.

- Don't let anything displace God's preeminent position in your heart and mind, let alone crowd Him out of your life altogether.

(Father David:) We are told to love (or worship) not the world, neither the things that are in the world, such as the love of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life (1 John 2:15-17). He did not say you would not like or enjoy or need or desire, with even His God-given desire, the things of this world and this life, including the lust of the flesh, which is very necessary for certain purposes, particularly for the survival and very existence of the flesh. But you're not to love them, worship

or lust after them excessively and intemperately, inordinately, more than is necessary, more than is meet, to the point that you put these things before the greater and higher values and even more essential necessities of the spirit, which are very necessary to the survival and eternal existence of the spiritual man.

For if you love the material world more than the spiritual, then it becomes a form of worship of the Creation more than the Creator, and God and His spiritual world refuse to take second place in your affections and your interests or even in the activities of your life. So, He says, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, all thy mind, all thy strength and all thy soul, and thy neighbor as thyself. He says these are the first and greatest of all the commandments in importance, and that you shall have no other gods before Him, for He is a jealous God, and He desires your love and for you to love Him first of all, above all, and seek first His Kingdom! But then if you do, He's happy to add all these other things unto you, including every desire of your desirous little heart—as long as you delight yourself in Him!

But if you put these desires of the flesh first above God and others and the needs of your spirit, then you'll find that nothing ever satisfies, not even the most total indulgence in the flesh! You will become as the world-famed poet, Lord Byron, when he despaired at the height of his fame with these words: "I've drunk of every fount of pleasure and quaffed every cup of fame, yet, alas. I die of thirst!" For the things of this earth can only satisfy your body, but only God and His true love can ever fill that aching spiritual void of your heart which He created for Himself alone! For true happiness comes not in your personal pursuit for selfish pleasure and satisfaction, but in finding God and giving His life to others and bringing them happiness! Then happiness pursues and overtakes and overwhelms you, personally, without even seeking it for yourself!

(ML #250:38-39, 42)

- Nothing but Jesus will satisfy!

(Peter:) If you're putting the Lord and His work first and His Kingdom first, with all your heart and soul and mind and strength, then everything else isn't going to make that much difference. The Lord can send blessings your way then because He can trust you with them, but if you forsake your plow and your relationship with the Lord to run off and get involved with some personal relationship, the Lord's not going to bless it and the Enemy can use it as a distraction!

The Lord is the only place you'll ever find the comfort and the peace that you need. Every other situation or person will fail, your jobs, everything. If you put your hopes in natural relationships, they will fail. It just doesn't work! The Lord's pretty smart, He designed things so that the only thing that really fills the void is going to be Him and nothing else is going to satisfy!

(Peter #35:18, 23; DB 3)

➤ Responsibilities to our greater family, the “Church”

- The Apostle Paul used the illustration of a body to help us understand how the Lord sees our unity. And as one body, we are married to Christ.

Romans 12:5—So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

1 Corinthians 12:12-14, 26-27—For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. (13) For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. (14) For the body is not one member, but many... (26) And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. (27) Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

Romans 7:4—Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.

See also: 1 Corinthians 10:17 and all of 1 Corinthians chapter 12.

- Caring for our “greater family”

Jesus made it very clear, by His own example of putting His spiritual “family” above His physical family, that our relationships with those who share our faith are very important.

Matthew 12:46-50—While He yet talked to the people, behold, His mother and His brethren stood without, desiring to speak with Him. (47) Then one said unto Him, Behold, Thy mother and Thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with Thee. (48) But He answered and said unto him that told Him, Who is My mother? and who are My brethren? (49) And He stretched forth His hand toward His disciples, and said, Behold My mother and My brethren! (50) For whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother.

In Bridges Class 4C, we discussed briefly how the Church is the “Bride of Christ.” In the next Bridge we will look at this concept in depth.

Revelation 19:7—Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready.

- Loving and caring for each other

Romans 12:10—Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another.

As parts of the Bride of Christ we should love and care for each other, whether we are related physically or not. Our personal and marital relationships should enhance our unity and strength together, not detract from it. Father David coined the term “One Wife” to encapsulate what the relationship should be like amongst Family members as God’s Bride. While the marriage unit is important and the little families are the building blocks for our greater family, in order to be the samples that the Lord wants us to be, we can’t selfishly put marriage or the individual family unit above all else. In our communal Homes, the ideal that we strive for is that everyone, married or single, feels loved and included, and that all the children receive quality care without partiality.

The Law of Love commands us to “love our neighbor as ourselves,” and that includes not only our own spouse and children, but also our spiritual brothers and sisters—to whom we are spiritually married together with Christ—and their children. This of course requires supernatural love that only God can give, and is one of the most difficult and sacrificial aspects of truly living the Law of Love. It’s our human nature to be selfish and put our own needs or those of our loved ones first. But it’s a vital part of being a disciple to extend that love to others! “By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another” (John 13:35).

This means we need a great love—to care not only about those closest to us, but also our fellow-believers.

(Father David, in prophecy:) Putting the greater marriage [to the body of Christ, His Church] first doesn't mean you need to minimize your ties to your personal family, but it means giving the greater marriage the proper importance. ... It means that instead of drawing a circle around your own little family that will shut others out, you are to draw a circle that brings [your spiritual Family] in. For example, it doesn't mean loving your own children less, but it means taking the children of [these] others into your arms, your heart, your lives, and trying to love them as much as you love your own. It means bringing others up to the level of love, understanding, sympathy, concern, and all the things you naturally feel for your personal family.

This is a complicated concept, because the Lord wants us to love others as we love ourselves. He wants us to be considerate of their needs, to give of our time, strength, love, and prayer, to do what we can to make sure all our brethren are well cared for, happy and complete, as much as possible. On the other hand, He purposely, distinctly, and within His will gives you greater natural feelings for your personal family, for your one wife or mate, and also for your own children. He does that because He knows we all need some personal touch in our lives. Children need personal attention and personal love, to feel like they belong to somebody, that they have a place. They need to feel the security, comfort and warmth of the family unit.

So there's a place for both—the personal, individual family and the greater family. Each has its purpose, and you can love one without neglecting the other.

I would say the tendency of most people, of course, is to have a deeper love for their personal family, their immediate mate and their own children. Our priorities usually center around our own mates and our own children—not only because of our natural selfishness and independence, but also because of God-given desires and burdens that He's put in our hearts to care for and protect our individual family units.

It's very natural and understandable to be more concerned about your own mate and your own children—that they have their needs supplied, that they are happy, that they feel loved and content and challenged. It's good to love your mate and children in this way, and it's part of your duty as a husband or wife or father or mother.

People of the world are also concerned for their immediate family. But it takes the supernatural love of Jesus, the miraculous grace of God, to try to love others as much as you love your personal family, and to care as much about their personal needs and their feelings of happiness, security, contentment and challenge.

(ML #3211:49-54, edited)

➤ **Unselfishness in personal relationships: The FFing example**

① *Note to teachers: If you have some good personal testimonies or first-hand accounts of FFing that you think would be beneficial to share with your students during the class, please do so if the Lord so leads you. Also, if the Lord leads you to explain how sharing between members of your Home is handled, please do. However, be mindful that it is not the best to talk about the personal lives of your Home members or other specific individuals. You can of course explain things in general terms. It is good to try and help people understand the practical application, but at the same time it can be quite sensitive and certain things might actually stumble your students. Please be wise and prayerful in what you share. You should counsel with your Home Shepherds on this beforehand.*

The key for all relationships, no matter whether short term or long term like marriage, is that we exercise the Law of Love and care more for others than we do about ourselves.

(Jesus:) Real love begins with an effort, because the mind must choose to turn from selfishness. Now I know that's the ideal, because of course you're still human and subject to human emotions, and there's always some thought of self there. But the point is to try to live My Law of Love, which is not focusing on yourself and what you want. It's taking others into consideration, and looking to Me and what I would have you do.

(ML #3455:167)

- “Flirty Fishing”—an example of unselfish, sacrificial love

Matthew 4:19—And He saith unto them, Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.

One example of unselfish love is the witnessing method which the Family used to use called “Flirty Fishing,” also known as “FFing.” This was practiced by some Family members from the mid 1970s to the mid 1980s, and discontinued in 1987. It is not practiced now, as Charter Family Disciples are not permitted to have sexual relations with anyone outside of that membership circle, but we thought you’d be interested in hearing about it.

This excerpt from one of our statements explains FFing:

In part as a response to the sexual liberality of the early '70s, Father David presented a more intimate and personal, voluntary form of evangelism, which became known as "Flirty Fishing" or "FFing." He offered in his writings the challenging proposal that since Jesus is the physical manifestation and embodiment of God's love for humanity, then we as Christians are in turn responsible to be living samples to others of God's great all-encompassing love.

Although sex and love are not necessarily directly linked, sex was nevertheless seen as an undeniable human need, and one that much of humanity equates with love. Therefore, Father David proposed that the boundaries of expressing God's love to others could at times go beyond just showing kindness and doing good deeds. He suggested that for those who were in dire need of physical love and affection, even sex could be used as evidence to them of the Lord's love. "If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,' but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?" (James 2:15-16 NKJV).

The motivation, guiding principle, and reasoning behind the FFing ministry was that through this sacrificial proof of love, some would better accept and understand God's great love for them. The goal was that they would come to believe in and receive God's own loving gift of salvation through His Son, Jesus, who gave His life for them. By this unorthodox method David felt many would find the Lord's love and salvation, who never would have otherwise.

(From the Statement “The Origins of a Movement”)

[Optional] There are some biblical precedents

(Father David:) Esther and Ruth are two outstanding shining examples of God's FFers who became so famous and influential that two entire books of the Bible were devoted to their stories and named after them!

Esther had to marry Xerxes, the heathen king of Medo-Persia, to get the job done and deliver God's people! So God can make exceptions to His own rules [that of, under the Mosaic Law, Jews being forbidden to marry a "heathen"]—if He wants to, in order to accomplish His purpose—in that case, even being unequally yoked with that horrible system—a terrible price for one of His girls to have to pay in order to free His people. She had to be willing to become a queen of the system in order to protect the Children of God! What an assignment! Would you be willing to go that far for the Lord and His children?—To marry someone you didn't love, or even like, in order to further the work of God?—Even contrary to the usual rules?

(Mop, FFing:98; ML #27:12)

- The Family of Love—Sin or Salvation?

(Father David:) From pretty young shop girls and waitresses and secretaries to elderly widows and rich old dowagers; from handsome young clerks, bookkeepers, technicians, white-collar workers and engineers to wealthy businessmen, retired widowers, single shopkeepers and even bachelor farmers, we found them all the same:

Hungry, lonely, empty, unhappy, dissatisfied and spiritually destitute—all longing for love of all kinds, but especially for a love they had never known before, true love, sincere love, genuine love, the truly great love of their life, the Love of all loves of the Lover of all lovers, Who alone can satisfy that deepest yearning of every human soul for total love and complete understanding.

He is the power and life of the universe that some people call God but that the Bible itself calls Love, for "God is love." (1John 4:8)

He's pictured in His Son Christ Jesus, a Man Who loved everybody, even the poorest and the worst of all. He is the Lover of all lovers, Who came for love and lived in love and died for love that we might live and love forever!

But He has no hands but your hands and he has no lips but yours and He has no eyes but your eyes and no body but your own, for you are His Body, His Bride for whom He died that you might live and love others as He did with your hands, your lips, your mouth, your tongue, your eyes and your body broken for them as He was for you, your blood shed for them as His was for you, your life given for them as His was for you, to even die for them as He did for you.

So we soon found out we could not enter these places for purely personal selfish recreation, exercise and entertainment. We could not come face to face and body to body with those who clung so desperately to us with such a yearning for us to meet their needs. We could not withhold bread from the hungry—the Bread of Life, Christ Jesus, nor drink from the thirsty—the Water of His Word, which satisfy the most ultimate longings of the human soul.

Flesh can satisfy flesh, but only spirit can satisfy spirit, and we soon found that we had to give of both to "satisfy all their needs according to His riches in glory." (Philippians 4:19) We could not withhold any need from the love-starved as long as we had it by us and within our power to meet it and to give our all for their healing and His glory.

We soon found there was no stopping place, no limit to which God would not go to save a poor lost soul with His infinite love and unlimited mercy! We soon found our hearts irresistibly drawn into the vacuum of their hearts to satisfy their spirits, even as our bodies were irresistibly drawn together and sucked into each other to satisfy their flesh!

There was nowhere to draw the line between the two, flesh and spirit. There was no halfway, there was no "almost." It had to be "all or nothing at all" or they could not believe it was real love. They could not understand how you could offer to fill their heart but not their body, to satisfy their soul but not their hungry flesh.

The two were inseparable, the one could not go without the other and we had to feed them both together. "If a brother or sister be naked and destitute of daily food [a necessary physical need like sex] and one of you say unto them, 'Depart in peace! Be ye warmed and filled!'—Notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit?"

"Even so faith, if it hath not works is dead" (James 2:15-17). In other words, if in the faith of God you really love them, they cannot understand it or believe it unless you really show them by some visible tangible work or action that puts your words into works and puts your faith into effect and makes it fact and not fiction, a sample, not just a sermon!

(ML #502R; DB 1)

- Flirty Fishing was tremendously fruitful!

(Peter:) The FFing ministry, which often—but not always—involved sex with those we were witnessing to was a ministry which was tremendously fruitful, with over 100,000 people won to Jesus because of our sacrificial love for the lost and willingness to "lay down our lives" for those we were trying to reach with the Lord's love and message. When we get to Heaven and meet those who were saved because of FFing, we will be thrilled and so thankful that we were willing to give our all to win them to the Lord.

(ML #2858:22)

- Despite its fruitfulness, we stopped the method for various reasons.

(Peter:) Some of the reasons for this change [stopping FFing] were because the Lord wanted us to put more of an emphasis on follow-up and grounding our converts in the Word. It also so happened that the plague of AIDS had begun its rampage through the world at that time, so it was the Lord's perfect timing for us to stop our FFing ministry!

(ML #2858:24)

[Optional] More on why we stopped FFing

(Maria:) FFing certainly helped us to reach people that may not have been reached otherwise, and there were tens of thousands of souls won as a result.

In order to really ground our friends more firmly in the Word, we recognized the need to spend more time feeding them spiritually. Also, we found that each one of our FFers was able to minister to more people if she was not so personally and intimately involved with them. And if the AIDS plague was a consideration when we first decided to stop FFing, how much more would it be a major factor in preventing us from going back to FFing, even if we wanted to. We have to do all we can to try to protect our dear Family, as Jesus needs each one of us to do our big job of reaching the lost for Him.

(ML #3049:122-123)

- FFing was an example of truly sacrificial love that we can learn from, even though we no longer use this method of witnessing.

It's God's love that grants us the liberty to share with others.—A genuinely sacrificial love, one that truly prefers the happiness of others to our own. The Lord's idea in teaching and giving us His Law of Love was to enable us to help and meet the needs of others, often at great personal cost and sacrifice!

When Father David wrote the Letters to the Family about sharing sexually with others, it was definitely considered a very sacrificial "cross," "laying down our lives for the brethren," and wasn't looked on as any kind of a self-gratifying plaything at all.

These freedoms were extended to those who would use them as a tool to help, heal and fill a desperate need. In FFing it was to fulfill a physical need in order to reach and win their hearts, enabling us to then fill their spiritual needs as well.

(ML #2718:40-42)

Part 4. Another side to relationships

➤ It's not always the Lord's will to pursue relationships

There are occasions when for reasons such as pressing responsibilities or personal lessons, we need to forego the pleasure of intimate relationships for a time. Sometimes this can include stepping back from an emotional relationship, giving up a relationship that has been bearing bad fruit in either partner's life, or abstaining from a sexual encounter or relationship that would not bear good fruit or could be hurtful to others or detrimental to the Lord's work.

(Maria:) There are quite a few good verses in the Bible about restraining yourselves. You don't have to do everything you may feel like doing, and you can certainly control yourself for the sake of God's work!

—See 1 Corinthians 9:27; Proverbs 16:32; 25:28; Luke 21:34; Romans 6:12-13; 13:14; Colossians 3:5.

You just have to bring your body and your mind into subjection, and whatever you do, do all to the glory of God, and nothing to the hurt of others. The Apostle Paul talks a lot about bringing our bodies into subjection. (1 Corinthians 9:27) If we didn't have such feelings or thoughts, we wouldn't have to bring them into subjection. In other words, there are some things that are all right in our minds and hearts, but when we start physically expressing them, that's when it's wrong.

We should not always think that every time we have some feeling of love for someone that it's just got to be acted upon! It's not always right or "expedient" that it should be, and I think we're too used to applying the principle that "'God is Love' and 'Love is God' so love can't be wrong."—But we need to make sure that we add the rest of the rule too.—If it doesn't hurt anybody!—A husband or wife or children or people you are responsible for, in a bad sample to them or neglect of them. I don't think we think enough about that second phrase and condition a lot of the time. We need to explore the possibilities of who it might hurt before we get into a love relationship!

It's obvious that not all strong emotions of desire, even for love or sex, come from the Lord.

Love is not wrong if we keep it in the proper place. Feelings are not wrong either, but they shouldn't always be expressed. In other words, we don't always have to fulfill the "lusts" or desires of the flesh. Even some of the good feelings and desires we have should not always be fulfilled in any major behavior or activity.

(ML #2536:9; ML #2590:49; Maria #60:9, FSM 56; ML #3485:183; ML #2590:53)

(Jesus:) Many others who have chosen to give their lives to serve Me have had to give up much more. Priests, monks and nuns down through the ages have forsaken sex and any intimate contact with others, even conversation, to live in solitude, contemplation and prayer, forsaking all carnal desires, contact with the world and stimulating experiences. I've given you, My Family of Love, the freedoms of the Law of Love that you might live My love more fully, and reach out and share them with others you come in contact with. I wish you to live in love and enjoy life to the full.

Just remember that these pleasures are a blessing, a bonus, a privilege, and that all you can be assured of and expect are service and sacrifice. The rest is a blessing of My love, but not entirely essential to doing your job for Me.

(ML #3216:51-52)

[Optional] Keeping our emotions under subjection

(Jesus:) The subject of emotions is a tricky and involved one. Emotions are not bad in themselves—they're My gift to you, My children—part of your humanity, in order to help you love, feel, empathize, experience, and grow. But just like everything else, if they take too great a predominance in your life, if you allow your emotions to control and lead you, above My Word and My Spirit, then this opens the door for the Enemy to enter with his counterfeit, undetected.

Human emotion is a very powerful force. The Enemy knows this, and he'll ride those emotions, encouraging you to follow your desires, follow your passions, follow your feelings, even into disobedience or situations that are selfish, hurtful, and unloving. He tries to hide under the guise of, "Well, God is love, and He gives us feelings of love and emotion. These feelings I'm having make me feel love, I feel desire, I feel passion. They help me feel good, so they must be good!" He'll encourage you that any form of emotion tied to wanting someone—be it a physical desire, or jealousy, or obsession, or even possessiveness—must be tied to love and therefore be from God, which is not true.

The whole principle of real love—My love—is based on the desire to do good for others, regardless of what you get out of it. But feelings of love and emotion which are based on wanting someone for yourself and dwelling on them and how they can please you, often to the exclusion of others, is in truth a love for yourself. Simply put, it's nothing more than selfishness.

If some emotion is obviously disrupting your life and your work for Me, take the time to sit down and sort it out with Me. Such things must be prayed over.

(ML #3485:188-189, 191, 202)

➤ **Being alone is sometimes God's plan**

It is not the Lord's plan for every one of us to have constant companionship. Sometimes we go through periods when we are alone, without the comfort and support of a personal relationship. If that's our situation, we need to learn to be content with the Lord, realizing our relationship with Him is the most important and valuable of all.

Hebrews 13:5—Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

- Loneliness can cause us to be more dependent on the Lord, which is a good thing.

(Maria:) Lots of people are lonesome if they don't have any human beings to depend on, but that's why the Lord takes loved ones away or doesn't provide help or companionship from others, so we will depend on Him and get close to Him, we'll hear from Him and get our orders from Him.

(Maria #60:48; FSM 56)

(Jesus:) I choose to bestow My love on each person in a special way. At times I call some to be wholly and completely Mine, without physical companionship of others, because I wish to give them My love in a special way, or I wish to receive more of their love.

It takes an effort to put all else out of your mind and be wholly Mine. But there is a place in each heart that only I can fill—and those who try to fill it with other things will sooner or later learn that they do not satisfy completely, and if they want to be fully used of Me, they must reserve that place for Me, and Me alone.

You who struggle with loneliness there on Earth, please see it as a gift of love from My hand, that I have chosen to withhold what you see as good—intimate physical companionship—in order to give you My best, what I know you need the most! And Here in My Heavenly Kingdom, all the tears are wiped away and desires are fulfilled! Can you not endure this for Me, so that you might be close to Me and able to be fully used of Me for the purpose I created you for?

(ML #3216:154-155, 158)

- Sometimes the solution to loneliness is looking for ways to give love to others rather than get love.

(Father David:) You must give, and it shall be given unto you. Love begets love. I knew a woman once who was always seeking a new lover, a new love, but never finding one that satisfied or lasted, because she was always seeking to get love, to receive love, to be loved. So when I suggested to her that perhaps she needed to learn how to give love, and to love unselfishly for the benefit and happiness of another, after years of searching, this struck her as an entirely new thought that had never occurred to her before! She went out soon and found what she was looking for all the time by trying to find someone who she could make happy by giving her love to them.

So maybe that's what's wrong with you—you've been looking for someone to make you happy.—Maybe you need to look for someone to make them happy, and then happiness will find you! For whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. It's just one of God's rules and laws of the spirit—just as definite and certain as some of the scientific laws of physics, such as gravity. The laws of the spirit, however, never fail! They always work—either for you or against you, according to how you obey them, and whether or not you obey them.—And the first law is the Law of Love—unselfish love—love for Him and others. If you will obey that one and give that love which is His and their due, so shall ye also receive, for with what measure ye mete unto other men's bosoms, so shall they also mete unto your bosom.

(ML #250:43b-44)

- The Lord wants us to trust Him, and if it's His will, He'll bring someone for us.

(Excerpts of prayer:) If we'll just pass the test and put You first, delight ourselves in You and Yours most of all, then You can trust us with other things, Lord, because they will not come between us. They will not supersede nor overshadow nor distract, but they will supplement and be a help and merely augment the work that we're doing in our ministry.

(ML #1380:16; DB 1)

➤ **Single or married, the most important thing is our relationship with the Lord!**

(Maria:) The Lord has made provision for all of us to love Him, to find our love in Him, and find our strength and our security and our companionship and our needs in Him, because without Him we won't be happy, and like He said, the marriage will collapse. So we might as well forget our own physical, earthly relationships unless they focus on the Lord.—Not just in name only, but really focusing on the Lord and making Him the center of our relationships.

The Lord ... can be a wonderful lover and friend and filler of all our needs in whatever state we are in. If the Lord has a job for you to do that He wants you to do together, then you have to do it together. If He wants you to do it singly, then you need to do it singly. And the Lord says we shouldn't compare. We shouldn't say, "Well, couples are better off." There are a lot of married couples that look at the singles and think, "Wow! We wish we were single! We wouldn't be so distracted and we wouldn't have all these demands on our time. We wouldn't have to worry about each other and talk to each other, and we could have more time to love the Lord!"

But then the singles say, "Boy, we're so lonely! We wish we could be mated!" So that's normal human nature—each one looks at the other and wishes they could be in a different state than the one they're in. But the Lord says you don't have to do that, and you shouldn't do that, because ... He says, "I can be whatever you need in whatever state I've placed you, and whatever kind of relationship you're in—or no relationship. You just all need to have a relationship with Me." And the Lord is showing us more and more and helping us to be able to do that more than ever before, because it's a new day and He knows how important our connection with Him is. So He's teaching us step by step how to be closer to Him and how to love Him more, because He needs us to have that closeness to Him.

So the main point is: How are we going to do the best job for the Lord, each one of us? The Lord knows what's best for each of us, and what's best for our ministry and calling. And if we'll just seek Him, He'll give us the kind of situation that He knows we need, that will be best for His work and best for Him, and best for us.

So if that's your calling and if the Lord is calling you just to love Him and not be distracted or involved in your heart with someone else, then that's the place you want to be.

Of course, at the same time the Lord's saying don't be selfish, there's still your Family to love and you still need to love each other. But in some cases it's not like a permanent, full-time, in-love relationship. He still wants us to love each other

and realize that the love we give others is His love to them, and their love for us is His love to us. So praise the Lord! He wants us to all love more: to love Him more and love each other more with His love. Thank You Lord!

(ML #3001:51, 61-62, 64-66)

Conclusion

➤ Remember:

- Marriage is a union of love ordained by God to fulfill our needs.
- Those who forbid to marry are in error.
- Marriages should stick together as much as possible, but divorce is permissible when necessary.
- Take time to work on your marriage!
- Sex in marriage is pure and ordained of God.
- In marriage man and woman are joined as one flesh.
- Sex is a marital right, not to be used to punish or reward.
- Husbands should treat wives with honor and love not merely as sexual objects.
- Part of the marriage commitment is being willing to invest the time needed to keep your relationship loving, strong and unified. Even if you're involved in another love relationship, you are bound by the Lord to put your primary relationship, your marriage, first.
- Our relationship with God and obedience to Him should have priority over family relationships.
- Don't let anything displace God's preeminent position in your heart and mind, let alone crowd Him out of your life altogether.
- Jesus made it very clear that our relationships with those who share our faith are very important. As parts of the Bride of Christ we should love and care for each other, whether we are related physically or not.
- Our personal and marital relationships should enhance our unity and strength with the "Church," not detract from it.
- If and when we find ourselves alone, without the comfort and support of a personal relationship, we need to learn to be content with the Lord, realizing our relationship with Him is the most important and valuable of all.
- Loneliness can cause us to be more dependent on the Lord, which is a good thing.
- Love begets love!
- Single or married, the most important thing is our relationship with the Lord!

① *Note for teachers' information: We will explain more about the practical application of the Law of Love in Family life and Homes in a later Bridge.*

END