

Marital Bliss or Breakdown?

By Mike Sciarra

Many marriages are on a crash course today. It seems that everywhere you look another one is falling to pieces. You see it in the movies, on television, in our neighborhoods. Sadly, even in our own homes and churches. Another home being broken; another spouse walking away; another spouse lashing out in anger; another child crying herself to sleep. We have all been torn up by the harsh reality of broken homes, shattered dreams, fractured lives. It is an alarming fact that screams for help that often we do not know how to give.

Christian marriages and families are in trouble these days. Family Life's produced a Family Needs Survey where they collected over 10,000 responses on families from local churches. The most alarming statistics were those regarding overall marital health. Only forty-two percent of Christian couples say they have a good marriage. That means that fifty-eight percent of Christian marriages are in trouble. Fifteen percent of couples say that they are in the "red light" area, which means that they are in trouble, headed for divorce, on a crash course. Forty-three percent say they are in the "yellow light" area, there are signs of trouble.¹

George Barna found that with regard to divorce Christians are more likely to experience divorce than non-Christians. Using statistics drawn from nationwide survey interviews with nearly 4,000 adults, the data show that although just 11% of the adult population is currently divorced, 25% of all adults have experienced at least one divorce during their lifetime. The study shows that among Christians, 27% are currently or have previously been divorced, compare with 24% among adults who are not born-again Christians.²

What can we do to help stem the tide of marital breakdown? I wish I had answers. I know the Word of God does. Titus chapter 2 verses 1-8 speak of older believers teaching younger believers; of men teaching men and women teaching women. I think that is the key. Older couples who will share the wisdom they have gained through the years are crucial. I think the following objectives are essential.

1. Husbands and wives need sound teaching. Titus 2 speaks of speaking things fitting for sound doctrine. We need to continue to share God's Word, expose couples to it, trusting God to do a work of mercy and grace in their hearts. Older, more experienced members of the body of Christ must come alongside for teaching and mentoring.

2. Husbands and wives need to know help is available. We need to make ourselves available to couples not only during times of crisis and instability but during times of wellness as well. We need to share not only the Word of God, but our very lives (1 Thess. 2:7-8) because our people are dear to our hearts.

3. Husbands and wives need opportunities for accountability. Give each couple in your church or organization the opportunity to choose to be accountable to at least one other couple, by letting them know of existing opportunities to connect and grow. Encourage them to be involved in some type of small group where accountability can happen.

¹Family Needs Survey, (Family Life, Little Rock, AR, 2000).

²George Barna, "Christians are More Likely to Experience Divorce Than are Non-Christians", News Release, December 21, 1999, Barna Research group, Ventura, CA, 1.

So what will it be? Marital bliss or breakdown? I am hopeful, because of Jesus Christ the tide can be pushed back and we can see marriages survive and thrive in this day and age for the glory of God. Picture this: Many marriages avoiding the obstacles of the crash course; everywhere you look another family putting the pieces back together; people being vulnerable and opening up; older believers being available to younger ones; people choosing to be accountable to each other in homes and churches. Another home being restored; another spouse coming back home; another child sleeping sound at night. There is hope in Jesus Christ. He is our only hope.