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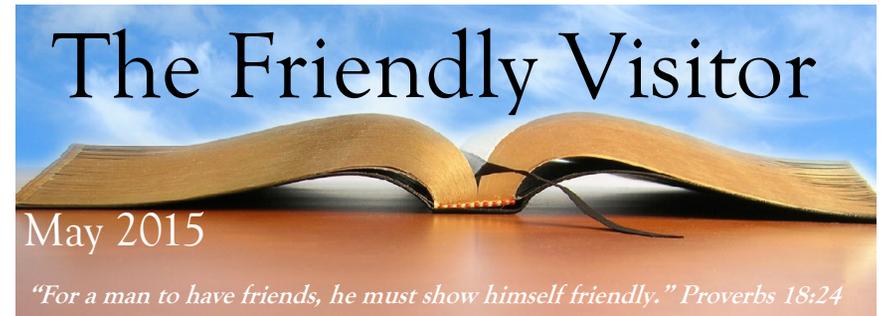
Wednesdays

7pm - Bible Study

Jones Road Church of Christ

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Divine Marriage Counseling

Marriage counseling is something almost everyone seeks at one time or another. For most, it is a rather informal asking of advice from someone they trust. But for others, it involves more formal sessions over an extended period of time with someone they trust as having special knowledge. Regardless of the form our seeking counsel takes, almost everyone acknowledges that a successful marriage sometimes requires help from others, and while I don't want to minimize the importance of human counselors (if they respect God and His word), our first and primary source for counsel should be the word of God.



In this article we want to "sit on the couch" and listen as God advises us on marriage. As you read through the following counsel, please take the time to look up all of the Scripture references and give them careful consideration. Even though many of the passages do not contain direct references to marriage, their application to marriage should be obvious. And while the advice of human counselors may be flawed, we must understand that God does more than give perfect advice—He issues commands that must be obeyed. It is vital, not only to the success of our marriages, but to the salvation of our souls, that we heed God's counsel.

1. Because God expects marriage to last a lifetime (Romans 7:2, 3; Matthew 19:6), we must make a commitment to our marriage and our spouse. We need a determination that we simply will not allow the marriage to fail. Good and lasting marriages do not just happen, but result from a commitment to doing whatever it takes to make

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things better and therefore enduring.

2. Understand the consequences of failure.
 - a. Unless we put away our partner because of his or her sexual immorality (Matthew 19:9), we will be sinning by separating what God has joined together. Matthew 19:6
 - b. By that act of divorce (putting away), we may cause our partner to be condemned. Matthew 5:32; 18:6, 7
 - c. An unlawful divorce may result in our own adultery and cost us our soul. Matthew 19:9
 - d. Failure within the marriage, even if it does not result in divorce, may harm our relationship to God. *“That your prayers may not be hindered.”* 1 Peter 3:7
 - e. Divorce, or even a tumultuous marriage, will have a negative impact on our children and can lead to failure in our teaching of them (Ephesians 6:4). Do we really expect our children to understand marriage when their parents don’t?
3. Be realistic.
 - a. Too many people are focused on the failings of their spouse without realizing that no one enjoys a marriage with a perfect spouse (including the one to whom they are married). Romans 3:23; 1 John 1:8
 - b. When we see lasting, happy marriages, we must realize we are not looking at people who have never experienced any problems in their marital relationship. Instead, these are couples who never viewed divorce as an acceptable alternative. Because divorce was out of the picture, they learned how to resolve many of the differences, and just as importantly, they learned to accept the fact that marriage to a human being involves marriage to an imperfect person.
4. *“Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another...”* (James 5:16). A sincere “I am sorry” will usually do a world of good, but understand that it must be sincere and followed by the fruits of repentance. Matthew 3:8
5. If we ever feel we are having to do more than our share and “our rights” are being neglected, we should remember the words of the Lord, *“It is more blessed to give than to receive.”* Acts 20:35
6. Do not be selfish. Focus on self is not the Lord’s way and will lead to conflicts in a marriage. *“Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit....”* Philippians 2:1-4
7. Do not nag. Constant criticism (even when justified and intended to

be constructive) is not conducive to marital bliss. *“It is better to live in a corner of the housetop than in a house shared with a quarrelsome wife [or husband—JRG]”* Proverbs 21:9 (English Standard Version)

8. We must never use the sexual relationship as a weapon or a manipulative tool in the marriage. The physical intimacies of marriage were intended for pleasure and to prevent sin (Proverbs 5:15-20; 1 Corinthians 7:1-5). Mistreatment or neglect at home never justifies anyone’s adultery, but the greater temptation we can cause our spouse is a reality we must face. *“Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband.”* 1 Corinthians 7:3
9. Husbands, *love* your wives as your own flesh (Ephesians 5:25, 28, 33). When \$400 for a gun or even \$10,000 for a new boat seems reasonable, while \$50 for a dress is “an extravagant luxury,” we might need to reconsider the phrase “as your own body.”
10. Wives, *submit to* and show *respect* for your husbands (Ephesians 5:22, 24, 33). The place of submission is the role assigned by God and the showing of respect is that which most men desperately crave.

(To be continued).

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[Please visit www.JonesRoadChurch.org for a series of lessons on *Building Marriages That Last.*]

“And He answered and said to them, ‘Have you not read that He who made *them* at the beginning “made them male and female,” and said, “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh”? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.”

Matthew 19:4-6