

Pre-Martial Counseling Session Six In-Law Relationships

Introduction:

- A. The home is important.
- B. I want to continue to study the home and encourage others to have a Christian home.
 - 1. I used to ask few questions.
 - 2. Present approach.
- C. We are talking about something you are all concerned about.
 - 1. You want your children to be happy.
 - 2. You want your parents to be happy.
- D. When viewed this way, you are on the same team.
 - 1. How are you doing?
 - 2. How are you grieving?

I. THIS IS A PROBLEM AREA.

- A. Couples married twenty years asked what was the most serious problem in achieving marital happiness; among six areas:
 - 1. Women mentioned in-Law relationships second.
 - 2. Men mentioned them third.
- B. 544 couples in early years of marriage gave in-Law relationships first place in their list of difficult areas.
- C. Reasons for problems - new relationships.
 - 1. For the newlyweds.
 - a. They are building a new relationship with the spouse.
 - b. A new relationship with parents - a partial withdrawing from accustomed closeness in favor of the new closeness with the mate (change from child to adult).
 - c. A new relationship with the in-Law Family.
 - 2. For the parents of the bride and groom.
 - a. A new relationship with son or daughter (from child to adult).

b. A new relationship with in-Laws.

c. A new relationship with each other - a high number of divorces occur after 25 years when children leave home.

II. PROBLEMS VIEWED FROM DIFFERENT PEOPLE.

A. Young people about parents-in-Law.

1. *They try to run our home.*
2. *They treat us as children.*
3. *They give us too much advice.*
4. *They try to help too much.*
5. *They try to influence our lives.*
6. *They hover over us.*

B. Daughters-in-Law about parents-in-Law.

1. *His mother insists on first place with my husband.*
2. *They still think he belongs to them.*
3. *They don't accept my status as daughter-in-law.*
4. *They try to steal my place as his wife and mother of his child.*

C. Husbands about daughter-parent relationship.

1. *She takes her mother's advice no matter how bad it is.*
2. *She tells her mother too much about our personal affairs.*
3. *She is too much at their call as if she were still their little girl.*

D. Spouse complaints about treatment around in-Laws.

1. *Embarrasses me in front of them.*
2. *Ignores me when we are with them.*
3. *Doesn't show affection when the in-laws are around.*
4. *Criticizes me in front of the in-laws.*

E. Troubles with children-in-law.

1. Some couples exploit their parents financially.
 - a. When a problem arises, they run to their parents for help.
 - b. A transfer of money requires maturity of the giver and the receiver.
 - (1) Gifts should have no strings attached.
 - (2) Loans should be understood as such and paid back.
 - c. When a good understanding does not exist, there are often hurt feelings.

Proverbs 22:7 the rich rule over the poor; and the borrower is slave to the lender.

2. Insensitive to needs of parents and parents-in-Law.
 - a. Lack of communication - parents are still concerned.
 - b. Imposition by wanting answers to all problems, then blame parents if it doesn't work out.
 - c. Impose by too much baby-sitting.
3. Failure to change from dependency and receiving to independence, giving, and gratitude.
 - a. A habit of eighteen years or more is hard to break.
 - b. *Reader's Digest*, April 1974, p. 80:

I have a brother who operates a small business in Oregon, manufacturing rubber stamps. Our father, who lives in Denver, asked my brother to mail him a stamp with his name on it and to enclose the bill with the merchandise. The stamp came promptly, but no bill was enclosed. After a few weeks, our father wrote again insisting that my brother send a bill. He finally received the following:

| | |
|--|--------------------|
| 1 Rubber Stamp | \$2.00 |
| | |
| Credit Memo: | |
| Teaching me that no work is degrading, if honorable | \$35,000.00 |
| Raising me in your belief not to compromise a principle for money | \$40,000.00 |
| Showing me how to respect all, no matter where they stand on the economic or social ladder | \$25,000.00 |
| | Total \$100,000.00 |

Net credit due you \$99,998.00

III. SOLUTIONS.

A. Genesis 2:24 *so a man will leave his father and mother and be united with his wife, and the two will become one body.*

1. Husband, wife, how do you plan to apply this?
2. Mother, father, how will you help your children apply this principle?
3. The story is told of a young bride from the East who followed her husband to an army camp on the edge of a desert in California. Living conditions were primitive at best. He had advised against her moving here, but she wanted to be with him.

The only housing they could find was a rundown shack near an Indian village. The heat was unbearable in the daytime, reaching 115 degrees in the shade. The wind blew constantly, spreading dust and sand on everything in the house. The days were long and boring because her only neighbors were the Indians, none of whom spoke English.

When her husband was ordered farther into the desert for two weeks of maneuvers, loneliness and the wretched living conditions got the best of her. She wrote to her mother that she was coming home - she just couldn't take it any more. In a short time, she received a reply that included these two lines:

Two men look out from prison bars, one saw mud, the other saw stars.

She read the lines over and over and began to feel ashamed of herself. She didn't really want to leave her husband. "All right" she said to herself. She would look for the stars. In the days that followed, she set out to make friends with the Indians. She asked them to teach her weaving and pottery. At first, they were distant; but as soon as they sensed that her interest was genuine, they returned her friendship. She became fascinated with their culture, history everything about them.

She began to study the desert as well; and so it, too, changed from a desolate, forbidden place to a marvelous thing of beauty. She had her cacti, the yuccas, and the Joshua tree. Later, she became such an expert on the area that she wrote a book about it.

The desert didn't change. The Indians didn't change. Simply by changing her own attitude she had transformed a miserable experience into a highly rewarding one. (*Whatever Happened to Mom, Dad, & the Kids?*, by Carl Brecheen and Paul Faulkner, pp. 162,163.)

B. Ephesians 6:2,3 *the command says, "Honor your father and mother. " This is the first command that has a promise with it-- Then everything will be well with you, and you will have a long life on the earth. "*

1. Husband, how will you apply this principle?
2. Wife, how will you apply this principle?

C. 1 Timothy 5:4 *but if a widow has children or grandchildren, Jet them first learn to do their duty to their own family and to repay their parents or grandparents. That pleases God.*

8 *Whoever does not care for his own relatives, especially his own family members, has turned against the faith and is worse than someone who does not believe in God,*

16 *If any woman who is a believer has widows in her family, she should care for them herself. The church should not have to care for them. Then it will be able to take care of those who are truly widows.*

1. A young man asked the father for his daughter's hand in marriage.

"Are you sure you can support a family?" the man asked.

"No, Sir, I'm not. But I was only planning on supporting your daughter. The rest of you will have to make it on your own."

2. How do each of you feel about support or helping support your parents and/or parents-in-Law, should this be necessary?

D. Love.

1. Love is not a feeling that you feel when you feel you're going to get a feeling that you never felt before.

2. Love is treating people right whether you feel like it or not. Matthew 7:12

3. Applications.

a. Parents, how did you want to be treated when you were first married?

b. Bride and groom, how will you want to be treated when you children marry?

c. What will you call each other?

(1) Mom, Dad.

(2) First names.

(3) Mr., Mrs.

d. Recognize a separate household.

e. In giving advice:

(1) Go slow.

(2) Wait to be asked.

(3) How would you like for someone to come into your home, uninvited, to give unwanted advice?

f. Where will you go . . . and how did you come to that decision?

- (1) Thanksgiving.
- (2) Christmas.
- (3) Mother's Day.
- (4) Father's Day.
- (5) Vacation.

g. Communicate.

1 Corinthians 2:11 *who knows the thoughts that another person has? Only a person's spirit that lives within him knows his thoughts. It is the same with God. No one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God*

Conclusion:

A. In-Law relationships can be great.

B. Some sadness and frustration are normal for everyone.

C. Some of the most beautiful words in the Bible are from a daughter-in-Law to her mother-in-law. Ruth 1: 16,17 *But Ruth said, "Don't beg me to leave you or to stop following you. Where you go, I will go. Where you live, I will live. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God. And where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried."*

Stone Soup

Three soldiers, Matt, Peter, and John, were traveling across the countryside, when they came upon a small town. Being very tired, cold, and hungry they walked toward the small town hoping that there would be someone in the town that would show kindness to three strangers.

Some of the people in the town saw the three soldiers coming over the hill.

"Strangers are coming," shouted the butcher.

"They will want us to share what we have worked so hard for," said the baker.

"Let's hide our food, and close our shops." Said the banker.

The banker hid his money and put a closed sign on the bank. The town innkeeper hid the keys to all of the rooms and put out a no vacancy sign. The farmer's wife hid the garden vegetables. She closed the door and shut the windows. The townspeople hid carrots and corn. They hid potatoes and peas. They hid broccoli, onions, herbs, milk, and meat. Soon there was not one bit of food in sight!

All of the townspeople practiced looking hungry, but by the time the soldiers reached the village there was no one around.

"Where is everyone?" asked Peter! "

"Probably inside having lunch." reasoned John "Can't you smell something delicious?"

"Yes," said Matt. "It's coming from that house over there. The door is even opened a crack."

"Maybe they saw us coming and are waiting for us," said Peter hopefully.

But when the three soldiers reached the door, it slammed shut. "Go Away! Shouted a voice from behind the door.

Next the three soldiers walked up to a man who was crossing the street. "Excuse me sir," said John "Could you help us? We have been traveling a very long time and could use a hot meal and a place to sleep."

"Go Away!" said the man in a gruff voice.

The soldiers knocked on every door and asked everyone that they passed but the answers were always the same. "No Food, No Room, Go Away!"

"What are we going to do?" asked Matt. "There is no one here that can help us."

"I have a feeling that no one wants to help us." Said John

"I think that these people have hearts of stone." Said Peter.

"That gives me an idea." Said Matt. The soldiers whispered their idea to each other and ran and rang the town bell. All of the townspeople came running to see what the fuss was all about.

"What's going on here?" said the mayor. "We only ring the bell when there has been an emergency."

"There is an emergency." Said Peter. "There is no food in this town."

"So we thought it would be a good idea to make stone soup and feed everyone." Said John.

"Stone soup?" said the farmer's wife. "I have never heard of it."

"Of course you haven't heard of it," said Matt." It is a secret recipe, but we will share it with you just the same." "

"Then we will all have something to eat and no one will be hungry." Said Peter.

"Well," said the Banker" What do we do first?"

"Heat some water in a pot." Said John.

When that was done, the villagers said, "What's next?"

"Well we need five stones that have been well cleaned." Said Matt.

Now this was really curious to the townspeople. They had never heard of such a recipe. After a few minutes they watched Peter dip his spoon into the pot, and look anxiously as he took a taste.

"Mmmmm," He said. "This stone soup is very good and almost done but it would be better if we could make fancy stone soup."

"How do we do that?" Asked the Mayor.

"Well it could use some salt, and pepper." Said Peter.

"I have those things," said the mayor's wife. I'll be right back." She hurried home and returned with her pockets full of salt and pepper.

"Oh thank you," Said Peter and he added them to the soup. "This is good but it could be better."

"What's next?" asked the Mayor.

"The soup is good but it would be better if we had some onions and carrots." Said Peter. "But I guess that we will just have to do with out them."

The farmer's wife said "I have some onions and carrots at my house." And with that she ran home and came back with a bag bulging with them.

"Oh thank you," Said Peter and he added them to the soup. "This is good but it could be better."

"What's next?" asked the Mayor.

Peter said, "If we just had some milk and potatoes"

"I have milk," said the innkeeper, and he ran home and returned with two buckets of Milk.

"I have potatoes," said the banker's wife and she ran home and returned home with a basket full of potatoes.

"Oh thank you," Said Peter and he added them to the soup. "This is good but it could be better."

"What's next?" asked the Mayor.

Peter said" If we just had some meat the soup would be perfect, but too bad that we don't have any. This will have to do.

"I know where we can get some." Said the butcher and he ran home and returned with a huge chunk of meat that he cut into small cubes.

"Oh thank you," Said Peter and he added them to the soup. "This is good but it could be better."

"What's next?" asked the Mayor.

Peter said" The best part, now it is time to taste the soup."

The Mayor grabbed a spoon and tasted it. "That's amazing, this is the best soup I have ever had, and to think it made with nothing but stones and water."

Matt announced that it was time to serve the Stone Soup, but the townspeople had more than just soup. They also brought fruit, bread, salad, cider, cakes, and pies. They ate and laughed and danced long into the night. When the feast was over the innkeeper asked the three solders if they would like to stay in his finest rooms.

The next morning, everyone waved good-bye to the solders.

"How can we thank you for the secrete recipe?" asked the Mayor.

"Just share it with everyone," said John. And the three solders went on their way.

The End