

Reflection Paper: Saving Your Marriage Before it Starts

Alfeny Reyes

MFT 509 Premarital Counseling

Professor Michelle S. Park, M.A., LMFT

Alliance Graduate School of Counseling

January 26, 2022

First Point: How Does this Inspire You Professionally and Personally ?

Overall the book, Saving Your Marriage Before it Starts: Seven Questions to Ask Before and After you Marry was very inspiring because I realized I was not alone with the things I experienced or witnessed. From a professional standpoint I work in a Family Shelter and I see couples and married clients have many of the problems mentioned in this book. The book inspired me to use the tools I learned in this book in order to help my clients. I will also be using these tools when I do premarital counseling and develop my career as a marriage and family therapist.

I was inspired to begin my journey as a premarital facilitator because I want to help couples have a healthy relationship. In the book the author mentioned that “Marriage cannot instantly cure all our ills, but marriage can become a powerful healing agent over time” (Parrott, 2015, p. 31). This quote was inspiring because it gives me hope that broken marriages can be restored if both partners are willing. That quote also can also be a motivation for many to hold on to in times of trouble. With time marriage can help you overcome many issues. As a counselor I would want to see the growth in my clients after they understood that with time healing can occur.

This book inspired me in my personal life because I can apply all of the tools in my own personal marriage. My husband and I did not take any premarital counseling before getting married but I wish I did. I like many of the characters from the book who believed the marriage myth and thought happily ever after would last forever. After I had a couple of months getting married I realized marriage was a lot harder than I thought. There were many times I wanted to give up in my marriage and hoped for some guidance. One of the main reasons was due to communication which most people in marriages struggle with. “Communication is the mortar

that holds the stones of marriage in place” (Parrott, 2015, p. 64). Without communication you and your spouse are setting up your marriage for failure.

Second Point: How Does this Inform You?

The book was very informative because I learned many things that I can apply to my personal and professional life. “Every person’s expectations around who does what in their marriage are shaped by the home they grew up in” (Parrott, 2015, p. 26). Like stated in the book, our ideas of how our marriages should be are formed by what we learn from our family and the environment we grow up in. An example of this in my personal life is I grew up with a father who dressed up for special occasions and had a very unique yet cool style of clothing. When I got married and went on dates with my husband, I expected him to do the same because for me by him dressing up it showed he cared about me. I later on learned that his father did not dress up often and his mother had to teach his father how to dress up. I remember feeling unmotivated to go out because I thought he did not love me enough to try and dress nice for me.

The book was informative in my professional life because it made me look at marriage differently. Many couples come with not only different viewpoints than each other, but different viewpoints than I have. We all have an idea of what marriage should look like which was already shaped growing up. An example of this would be having clients from a different belief than each other.. Maybe my client does not believe in the same order of marriage; which is God first, your spouse, your kids, your family, and everyone else. If that is the case they will have a harder time being intimate with each other. “Intimacy grows when nurtured by shared emotions, experiences, and beliefs” (Parrott, 2015, p. 62).

Third Point: How Does this Impact You?

This book impacted me because I felt connected to some of the characters in this book. “Couples who swallow the myth that their spouse will make them whole become dependent on their partner in a way that is by all standards unhealthy” (Parrott, 2015, p. 33). An example of my personal life was when I got married. I was depending on my husband to make me feel happy and complete, but there was always a void left. That void could never and will never be filled by husband or anyone. That void could only be filled by God. My husband had become an idol to me and I was unhappy. It took a lot for me to realize that I am in control of my own emotions and it is not my husband's job to make me feel whole.

I used to suffer from depression and blamed it on my partners and our problems. When I read the verses “If you are depressed, it is not because your wife is failing you, but because you have chosen to be depressed” (Parrott, 2015, p. 81). This impacted me because it brought back memories and feelings about the way I felt and acted. Now I look back and think to myself why did I do that? I could have avoided some arguments and tears and not wasted so much time choosing to be depressed.

Another quote from the book that impacted me personally and professionally is “Most negative people feel they could be positive if they had a different job, lived in a better place, or married a different person. But happiness does not hinge on better circumstances. A person with bad attitude will still be a person with bad attitudes, wherever and with whomever he or she lives” (Parrott, 2015, p. 72). Professionally and personally, I sometimes complain about my job because I am not making enough and I am not actually counseling. However, this book made me realize that I have to start my professional life from the bottom and build myself up. That should also not determine my happiness. Although I am not officially a counselor I can still give clients advice. I should not wait until I have the “perfect” job in order to be happy.

Fourth Point: How Does this Convict You?

As I read through the book there were many times I felt convicted by some of the things the authors quoted and the examples they gave. Not only could I relate to some of the things mentioned because I went through it, but there are still things I have not learned and I am still learning. One personal example is the way my partner and I communicate. Although I realize my partner and I have come a long way and are better at communicating than before there are still some things we struggle with. That is because we communicate differently. Some are healthy ways of communicating others are unhealthy ways that we communicate.

“Non-talking is not a lack of communication but a form of communication that sends a surplus of negative messages” (Parrott, 2015, p. 91). I used to get really angry when my husband would not talk about the situations I preferred. He argued with me not realizing he was communicating. I also would sometimes give the silent treatment to my husband whenever I was upset or angry, and was hard on myself about not communicating not realizing I was.

Professionally I could have a client who either does not know how to communicate or is communicating but they don't understand that they are. As a future counselor I need to understand that every client is going to communicate differently. Some clients are going to be more quiet than others and sometimes that's ok. I remember having a client where I currently work and I was doing their intake and psychosocial and he gave me direct short answers. I thought he did not want to talk to me. I also thought to myself he might ask to get transferred to another Case Manager and it turned out that was a part of his communications style and personality.

Fifth Point: How Does this Challenge You?

As I read some of the exercises in the workbook exercise and the rest of the book there were things that I used to find challenging and some things that I still find challenging. One of the things I find challenging in my personal life is learning how to identify the way I feel after overreacting. “The next time you find yourself communicating with your partner by placating, blaming, computing, or distracting, remember that you are probably feeling hurt or stressed out about something” (Parrott, 2015, p. 93). That is challenging for me because It is hard to think about the way you are feeling when you are angry. When I am too angry I find myself trying to distract myself from feeling anything instead of getting to the root of the problem.

In my professional life one of the things I would have a challenge with is with clients who are used to blaming others. Clients who blame others usually do not take responsibility for their actions and feelings. I think It would be challenging for me to work with clients like this. However, once I am prepared and more educated on how to deal with this I will be able to assist the client by teaching them healthier ways to communicate. I can teach them to look at the root of their problems. That way both partners can communicate effectively and feel safe to do so. “Couples report that the number one problem they face in marriage is a breakdown in communication” (Parrott, 2015, p. 88).

To sum it up, couples can sometimes communicate the wrong message. That is, in text messages it is difficult to know what someone meant or felt because you can't hear their tone or see their facial expressions. Effective communication plays a big part in having a healthy marriage. This book was very good at highlighting all of these points. There are many things in my personal and professional life that convicted, challenged, inspired, impacted, and informed me. I can't wait to use everything I learned and apply it in my workplace and in my own marriage.

References:

Parrott, L. and Leslie (2015). Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts: Seven Questions to Ask Before and After You Marry. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zedervan. ISBN-10: 0310346282; ISBN-13:978-0310346289 (***SYMBIS**)