

Reflection Paper

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I did not know about premarital counseling when I married in Korea, and I also did not acknowledge its importance. I reflected on my married life while I was reading textbooks and taking the class. There are a bunch of essential factors to thrive in marriage. If I knew about premarital counseling, I would have reduced the conflict with my husband during my married life. It is not easy to pick only five profound points from the books. However, I chose five profound points considering my experiences in marriage.

1. Facing the Myths of marriage with honesty

The Myths of marriage that we believe are not formed suddenly. It has been invading our minds for a long time and makes us have certain expectations about marriage. We just believe and hope that myths come true in our marriage, whether the Myths are proven or not. I realize expectations and beliefs from the Myths lead us to be disappointed, and blame each other easily, and that raises conflict and makes our relationship weak. I had an experience with this during the first 10 years of my marriage. I had a Myth that if we were married, we would have to choose my way of living. I was very frustrated when my husband did not listen to me when I explained why he should do things my way.

For instance, my style of packing for a trip is to be done before the date, while my husband packs up on that day. His style made me angry and a little anxious because I always thought what if something happens? I explained to him why we should pack up early but he did not agree and refused to change his way of packing. I did not understand him and judged him and called him an irresponsible man. Sometimes he did when I forced him to do it, but he did not want to do it voluntarily. It was a big issue for me in early marriage. I felt like we were not on

one team, and he did not love me. I know it is silly to hear, but I was so frustrated because of that. The Myth that I had about doing things my way drove me crazy and I almost hated my husband. As time goes by, I read some books related to relationships and marriage. I realized that love does not mean to follow one lifestyle. Rather, love means respect for each other even though we are different. So I decided to make two bags for each one of us and I did not mind when and how he packs up his bag for a trip. From that time, I never mentioned packing, not even one sentence.

It is not only about packing style. I found myself forcing my husband to follow my ways in many areas because I thought they were wise. I interpreted his reaction as whether he loved me or not. I knew it was not true to have one life style when you are married. Now I keep trying not to force him to follow my ways, instead I make suggestions. The choice is his. Knowing the Myths of marriage is important for couples to start a marriage. It helps couples to build their marriage on reality, not fantasy.

2. Habit of happiness

The way of thinking is like a contact lens because I begin to see the world in red color if I wear a red contact lens. The way of thinking, understanding and interpreting seem to be a habit. Therefore, deciding to be happy is to see the positive rather than the negative side in every situation. We see, hear and think about something around us, whether we want to or not. Sometimes I used to say that you made me sad, angry and even happy. I thought my response depended on others' behaviors. For instance, I get frustrated and sad when people do not respond to my text, and I get angry if my husband and children do not listen. I had no self-control; I wanted to control my family. But I read and learned from classes that my responsibility is not

just what I have to do, it also applies to my feelings, thinking and reactions too. It is very challenging for me to be in charge of my emotions and reactions. There is no blame exit for me. I have a responsibility to decide whether I get happy or angry.

I used to think my happiness depended on my husband in my marriage. It was a totally unhealthy expectation and it ruined our relationship. There were many other options to interpret situations, but I could not stretch my thinking that far. Instead, I focused on only one way and that was blaming others. It was immature behavior and an unhealthy way of thinking. We can decide to see positive sides and interpret for many good reasons. It helps me and also my relationships with others. Everything comes out of me, not others. I am still practicing it. It is not easy to take all responsibilities, including feelings. However, I know this practice will change my perspective toward others and the world. It also helps couples go through many hardships in their marriage in wise ways.

3. Communication

Love starts from communication and conflict also starts because of communication. Communication is a primary tool for communicating with others, and it is very important to learn how to communicate better. As a result of poor communication, there is a lot of misunderstanding and it leads to conflict. Also, people did not communicate with a sincere heart because they prepared for what they wanted to say while listening. I did not think that attitude was that much rude or not right because we needed to respond also. However, I learned that good communication is not only saying what I want to, but also listening to what others say and trying to be in others situations.

I remember my parents arguing most of the time when they talked to each other. They were always placating, blaming, despising, distracting when they argued. These attitudes raise fights. But 'I statement' is beneficial to express what I think and feel without judgments. After learning the statement, I keep trying to use it when I communicate with my family. I had the experience of reducing conflict because of 'I statements'. My husband and I had different perspectives on education for our children. Whenever we discussed the issue, we showed negative emotions such as anger, fierce ignorance and blaming the other. It's been more than three years. However, I can see a change after I use 'I statements'. I tried to listen to my husband's point of view and retell him what I understood. Also, I said how I feel when my husband talks about his idea about education for our children. I showed him respect and understanding so our communication was pretty good compared to the past. Now I am trying to use and teach the 'I statement' to my children. I think it is a good way to learn communication skills from childhood through their parents.

4. Understanding Gender difference

We can solve many problems and handle them well if we know the reasons, for instance, if we do not know basic knowledge about infants, we would have a hard time whenever a baby cries. However, if we have the basic knowledge about infants, we can check diapers or feed a baby when the baby keeps crying. At the same time, we can understand and accept our spouse's behaviors more when we know about gender differences. There are many conflicts and sadness due to the unknowns about gender. That leads us to judge others easily. We want our spouses to be like us, but that is impossible because God made us different. As we know, even people of the same gender have differences. It will be helpful to understand each other and react differently.

Ignorance of people's differences can make us unnecessarily question why people behave the way they do.

I am an emotional woman and my husband is a rational man. I get disappointed whenever he says we do not have enough money to help people this time. I feel like he has no affection for people in hardship and I judge him in my mind. Is he a real Christian? From my husband's perspective, I seem like an irresponsible and impulsive woman not considering reality. There was no understanding of general gender differences and personality. There was no right or wrong, it was just different colors.

After I learned that, it released me in many areas. I do not see our difference as right or wrong but the variety of being the perfect one. So I started to take his perspectives as relevant as my perspective so we can discuss together and make good decisions so it is a win-win outcome for the both of us. Moreover, it will be better to know about the personality of each other. It gives me a chance to know more about myself and understand each other more.

5. Marriage reveals God's characters

I personally have questioned what marriage is and what purpose is until the middle period of my marriage. Was it for the purpose of understanding and loving each other and making a happy family? I think the purpose of marriage is different depending on a person's expectation. As a Christian, at first, my purpose of the marriage was to make a healthy and happy family, as time went by, I realized that marriage was a place to train me to follow Jesus's characters such as love, patience, control and peace, etc. Therefore, my husband and children experience God's image through me. Then the main reason for the training is to reveal God's character to the world.

Marriage is a tough and painful training center, but it is worth it. I am still working on it and this training is an ongoing job.

My spouse is not in the marriage anymore for the purpose of giving me happiness. Rather he can experience God's character through me. We are different so we can't be the same person, but we focus on God by making a triangle relationship. We keep trying to follow and practice God's character in relationships. We can be the one in Christ resembling him. We can live life eagerly when we have the right purpose of marriage. It does not mean we don't have problems, but we can see and solve many problems and conflicts in marriage with God's perspective, not our own ways. Therefore, setting a purpose of marriage to reveal God's character is the way to go about marriage.