

Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts

Shintia Manzanares

Alliance Graduate School of Counseling

MFT 509: Premarital Counseling

Prof. Michelle S. Park

January 31, 2023

“Without the capacity to rise above your circumstances, you will never cultivate happiness. You may have more success, beauty, intelligence, health, and wealth than anyone else, but if you do not cultivate contentment in every circumstance, unhappiness is certain.” (Parrott & Parrott, 2015, p. 77)

I really liked this paragraph because I am working towards this goal; cultivating contentment in the middle of every circumstance. I have learned that life is a cycle, sometimes we are up at other times we are down and both seasons can teach us a lot. I am going through a season in life in which I am required to have a lot of patience and trust in the process.

For many years I wanted to go back to graduate school and I just could not make up my mind to do it, but in November of 2021 I received a word from the Lord through someone I do not know and it was the confirmation I needed to go back to school. I had an idea on what I wanted to study, but I had not found the right program until I came across Nyack and their Marriage and Family Therapy program; it was exactly what I was looking for. Since I started in the program, my faith has been tested and I have been required to rise above the circumstances.

When I received the word about going back to school, I was told that everything was ready for me to start, but I thought it was going to be my way. However, God always knows best and usually our ways are not his. Since I am a Real Estate agent I thought I was going to be able to pay for school without a problem, but all of a sudden my deals started to fall through and my payments for school were approaching. I started to get frustrated because I did not know what I was going to do. I decided that if God had opened that door He was going to get me through and He has. This season in my life is teaching me to be content with what I have and to trust that God is in control even when everything around me seems to be falling apart. I am focusing on enjoying the MFT programs and doing the best I can because I am sure God's got me.

Most incongruous expectations fall into two major categories: unspoken rules and unconscious roles. (Parrott & Parrott, 2015 p. 22)

Growing up nobody sat with me to tell me these are the rules of the house or these are the roles you are supposed to follow, I just knew what was expected of me by the way I was treated. Going back many years, I remember that I was not allowed to go out with my friends if I was not accompanied by someone, usually my younger brother. That made him take on the role of my protector and it got to a point that he became jealous when my friends visited me at home. That caused frustration and tension between both of us and we would fight a lot because of his attitude. The unspoken rules in my family made my brother take on a role he was not supposed to.

After my parents divorce, I stayed with my mother and lately I have been seeing unspoken rules and unconscious roles between us that I was not conscious about. Being a Real Estate agent gives me flexibility with my schedule and I work from home most of the time. My mother on the other hand works outside of the home. As crazy as this might sound, my mother has taken on the role of a husband and I have taken on the role of a wife. I keep the house clean and cook sometimes and my mother comes home and rests, which is what I saw in my family of origin when growing up. Women were supposed to stay in the house to take care of it and men would go out to work. It is interesting to see how we adopt patterns from our family of origin that we say we will never repeat and when we least expect it, we see a continuation of them. Learning about the unspoken rules and unconscious roles has encouraged me to be more cautious of the expectations I have of others and vice versa. It also challenges me to break patterns that I do not want to continue with my own family.

The truth is that not everything gets better. Many things improve in relationships, but some things become more difficult. Every successful marriage requires necessary losses, and in choosing to marry, you inevitably go through a mourning process. (Parrott & Parrott, 2015, p. 27)

I find this to be interesting because I think of the life I have right now as a single person and I really enjoy it. I have the freedom to do things that when I get married I won't be able to do. For example, I love to travel, and right now I can plan a trip from one day to the other and leave. However, when I get married that is something that I will not be able to do because I will have to take another person into consideration when planning a trip. Just thinking about it scares me a little bit, but I am grateful that I get to read this kind of information because I can prepare myself for when the time comes.

I idealize marriage a lot, I love the whole idea of romance. This book is an eye opener for me, I used to think that after getting married everything was going to get better and life would be perfect. However, I like how the author explains how successful marriages go through necessary losses, but those losses make a relationship improve if they are worked out as a couple and both partners are understanding of one another.

One of the inconveniences I see about marriage is just getting used to another person having an opinion on my decisions. But at the same time I see it as a gain because even the Bible mentions that two are better than one and my partner could see things that I am not seeing and show me ways to improve what I am doing. I might go through some losses as an individual when getting married, but I believe those losses will make the couple win.

Marriage is filled with both enjoyable and tedious trade-offs, but by far the most dramatic loss experienced in a new marriage is the idealized image you have of your partner.

(Parrott & Parrott, 2015, p. 27)

This definition of marriage in the book is interesting, enjoyable and tedious at the same time. It scares me a little bit, because when you meet someone and you fall in love with that person you see them as perfect human beings, even though you know they are not. I feel it is hard because you try to avoid seeing the imperfections in the other person and always try to see the best in them, but that can only last for so long. No wonder why most of my friends who are already married keep telling me to enjoy life as a single person for as long as I can. I used to wonder why they made those comments because I saw how much in love they were when they got married; now I understand them and pray that they learn to enjoy the good and the bad in their marriage.

The paragraph I chose makes me think of myself. I always like to present my best image everywhere I go, even at home most of the time. However, there are days that I stay in my pajamas for as long as I want, but I do not let other people see that; and I believe the same thing happens to couples. Before getting married they only show what they want their partner to see, once they marry they really show who they are. A cousin of mine tells me that when she was dating her now husband, they would go out to eat but she would not finish her food because she pretended to be full and she would take the rest home and finish it there. She was ashamed of her boyfriend, at the time, seeing her eat so much. Her boyfriend's image of her must have been that she was fit and was going to be like that forever. Soon after they married, he realized that she is a food lover. If he had kept the image of her eating so little, it could have caused tension in their marriage. This example might sound silly, but if her husband would have been someone who is

very strict with his diet it could have caused big problems. Being honest from the beginning is essential for a relationship to work.

34 percent of couples admit to answering their phone during “intimate” moments. 20 percent of people would rather go shoeless for a week than take a break from their phones. 65 percent of people sleep next to their phones. (Parrott & Parrott, 2015, p. 106)

These statistics are concerning because I believe many relationships are destroyed by social media and the inability to disconnect from phones, ipads, TV, or tablets. I chose this point because I have seen how disconnected my mother and I could be, even living under the same roof. Social media and the use of cell phones sometimes cause heated arguments between both of us. As these statistics show, the same thing happens to couples. I have seen a phrase that says that social media connects people far away from each other and disconnects the ones close to one another and I find that to be true.

Learning about these statistics encourages me to tell people about them, especially couples who want to grow in their intimacy. I would love to show them that such a small item can be the cause of tension in their relationship and to some even be the cause of divorce. To some people it might be challenging because phones, laptops, ipads might be the tools they use for work daily, but setting a schedule to put them away when at home could be helpful.

I believe that if couples are aware of this kind of information and keep it visible, they will be aware of the amount of time they are really wasting using them. I would love to encourage them to disconnect from the virtual world and to reconnect in real life. If they don't think it is possible to disconnect from the virtual world, there are different tools that can help them do it; such as setting a timer or locking their devices for certain periods of time, actions like this will show their partner that they really want to work in benefit of the relationship.

Reference

Parrott, Les; Leslie Parrott. (2015). *Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts*. Zondervan.

https://read.amazon.com/?ref_=dbs_p_ebk_r00_pcb_rnvc00&encoding=UTF8&asin=B00UF72CMW