

How We Love E-zine

MYTHS & MISCONCEPTIONS OF MARRIAGE

By

Milan and Kay Yerkovich

A myth is a fairy tale or story about heroes that offers explanations about the origins of natural phenomena or aspects of human behavior. A misconception is mistaken idea or view resulting from a misunderstanding. What expectation did you have on your wedding day about love and what marriage would be like? Maybe some of your disappointments and unmet expectation come from myths and misconceptions about marriage. The media feeds us a constant diet promoting an idealized picture of love, romance, sex that influences our thinking. In addition to the influence of the media, the families we grow up in shape our expectations about love and marriage. In our book, *How We Love*, we talk about the impact of our relationship with our parents in creating a “love style” that governs how we interact. Embedded within each of these love styles are myths and misconceptions about love.

We all enter marriage with a *belief system* relative to love, relationships and sex. The sad reality is that myths and misconceptions create false beliefs of idealized romance. We come to marriage with expectations and hope that burn deeply within each of us. When these hopes are not realized, couples are deeply disappointed and led to despair. Unfortunately, the level of marital disillusionment has led to a whopping 50% divorce rate amongst churched and un-churched couples. In this issue of How We Love E-zine (e-magazine), we will explore:

1. Common myths and misconceptions of marriage.
2. The “Hollywood” (humanistic) worldview of romance and sex.
3. Why do relational problems develop?
4. Biblical truths that help us have a healthy view of our relationships.

Common myths and misconceptions of marriage.

Here are the most common responses that we hear from people in our seminars, offices and on the radio as people voice their true feelings about life and love. While you may find some of your favorites in any category, we have listed those most common to each of the love styles we describe in our book; the Avoider, the Pleaser, the Vacillator, the Controller, and the Victim.

General Myths and Misconceptions:

- “If it is real, deep, love it will naturally carry us to new highs of experiential love.”
- “Sex should be good with no problems.”
- “Christians won’t have marriage stress, and if they do, they can be “delivered” or have “victory” over it and it will go away!”
- “The Bible says ‘The two shall become one’ and we don’t always feel that way, so something must be wrong!”
- “In the words of Rodney King, ‘Can’t we all just get along?’”

Avoiders often have these misconceptions.

“Staying in love should be as easy as falling in love. It was so easy!”

“Good intentions will keep us going.”

“I shouldn’t have to change my mate should love me just the way I am.”

“This is too hard; I must have married the wrong person.”

Pleasers tend to hold to these false beliefs.

“If I were honest with my mate, I don’t think that they could handle it!”

“If I try hard enough I can make everyone happy.”

“It’s better to ignore problems than cause a fight.”

Vacillators are drawn to these myths and misconceptions:

“If the passion is gone, something is seriously wrong.”

“I’d be happier with another person. My mate is hopeless. This is too hard!”

“I just know my “soul mate” is out there.”

“Love should not make me feel so conflicted. On one hand, I’m drawn toward relationship yet on the other hand, we repel one another and cause such hurt.”

“I keep trying to change my mate, but they won’t budge!”

“If the feelings are gone, there is no hope.”

Controllers often believe these myths and misconceptions.

“If my feelings aren’t there, then I’m not obligated.”

“My spouse should just know what I need and what I’m thinking!”

“My way is the right way.”

Victims often believe these myths.

“Other people know best.”

“I deserve what I get.”

The humanistic “world view” of romance and sex.

What are we told every day by the media and Hollywood? What are the societal views that are accepted as *truth* within the secular “world view”? Here is what we see reflected from the minds and hearts of the people we have seen over the years.

1. Hollywood, Madison Avenue pornography, prostitution and our own fantasies create a “Fictitious Woman”. This fantasy, persistently and flagrantly foisted upon us through the media, portrays the woman as having the same drives, sexual hunger, lust and aggressive characteristics as the male. This is appealing to the male, who desires to be pursued and seduced by the female. The problem is 99% of wives don’t meet this fantasy and never will. False expectations are created and frustration ensues. The male really believes this LIE and searches for this women, waiting to discover her. In the media, males are portrayed as sexual predators, constantly on the hunt. Men who are not like this often feel defective.

Milan & Kay Yerkovich

2. The male may express dissatisfaction with his wife and place immense pressure upon her to change, wanting her to do more than enjoy sex. He may desire her to be an aggressive pursuer, who cannot wait to seduce him. We can even do this as Christians, imposing a worldly stereotype upon our spouses.
3. Peer pressure during adolescence is a strong force shaping the sexual behavior of males and females. Males are often introduced to pornography and may develop habits of frequent masturbation becoming accustomed to quick intense sexual experiences devoid of real relationship. Promiscuity is common, and to have sex is to “score”. (If you love me, you’ll let me). Frequent sex, with little “real-life relationship”, may establish unrealistic patterns of desire and “need” later in the marital relationship. Most sexual addictions have their origin in adolescence when the sexual drive is fed relentlessly. Sex can become like a drug providing a rush of adrenaline, a distraction from the growth pains of adolescence and frequent enough to make a transition to satisfying marital sex difficult if not impossible.
4. When disappointed with the realities of marital sex, the male (or female) may engage in a fantasy world in which sex with the fantasy lover is perfect and unfettered by the difficulties of real relationships.
5. The male (or female) may be drawn to illicit promiscuous sex, which is exciting and exhilarating, and adrenaline producing, and again devoid of “real life”. Feeling seduced and desired in an affair, one feels they have “found” what has been missing. “This is it!” The affair continues, divorces are secured, the new couple get married, settle into a routine and reality hits. Unless this cycle is recognized and stopped, the search goes on, and on and Satan keeps his victim entrapped in his snare.

What are some of the responses to the pressures created by these innate and cultural misconceptions? Couples feel angry, hurt, defective, guilty, panicky, and quite often hopeless and cynical. Many women will pray, “Lord, Creator of sex and romance, please change me so I want sex as much as my husband.” And the typical prayer of the husband is “AMEN!” When that prayer goes unanswered women feel confused and defective. Feeling defective does not increase sexual interest! In reality, these women are often great responders when the man offers touch and foreplay. However, “Hollywood” has suggested women should be seducers not responders.

Why do relational problems develop?

There are many reasons why relational problems develop. Actually, many of our relational deficiencies were infused into our being long before we ever fell in love. Here are just a few.

1. Inadequate parental relational modeling and teaching as well as hurts and pains from our family of origin (FOO) that result in an injured attachment experience.
2. Roles or defenses learned in childhood that were protective then, but when maintained into adulthood, block and hinders intimacy *now*.

Milan & Kay Yerkovich

3. Repression of certain feelings in childhood creates an inability to feel a wide range of emotions as an adult. Feelings are indicators of “needs”, so... if you don't know what you feel you won't know what you need
4. Wrong priorities such as an over focus on children or work / career to the detriment of the marriage.
5. Day to day as well as stage of life “stressors” that push weaknesses to the forefront.
6. Constant or chronic conflict without healthy resolution results in resentment, bitterness, and anger. Successful conflict resolution (a learned skill) promotes intimacy.
7. Blaming your spouse, rather than taking responsibility for your contribution to the problems contributes to the deterioration of a relationship.
8. The Biblical concept of “sin” includes the concept of “missing the mark”. All of us miss the mark daily in every aspect of our lives and fall short of God's ideal. Accepting that we are broken and we are married to a broken person helps expectations to be more realistic. We all need to view ourselves as people who are “in process”, moving from hurt to healing.
9. Because sex is such a dominant drive in our lives and Satan is the “god of this world”, he is continually ensnaring and exploiting this drive into distorted aberrations of the original design. As a result, we are each hurt and injured by the distorted thinking and subsequent actions of others as they are influenced by Satan's lies. In a fallen world with an enemy who wishes to ensnare us and keep us from living for God, the three things that are used most frequently to hook us are sex, power and money (I John 2:15-17).

Marriage is a continuous, dynamic, fluxing, evolving, montage of issues, stages, passages, stresses, difficulties, disappointments, accomplishments as well as the unrelenting “urge to merge” with someone who loves us. Our own issues, hopes, desires, hurts, pains, baggage, dysfunctions in addition to my spouses own set of issues leads all of us into muddy world in which we need God's help and perspective.

Biblical truths that bear upon our relationships.

1. Marriage is “special” and “sacred” (Genesis 2):
 - ◆ Male and female are above the rest of creation in that they are made in the “image and likeness” of God and were designed to complement one another. “Aloneness” is replaced by “relationship”.
 - ◆ We are not “one” per se, rather we are individual persons “glued” together, who can enjoy being “one flesh” (sexual union).

- ◆ Marriage is the most sacred of all human institutions, in that God has joined man and woman together. It is to be carefully guarded, preserved and nurtured as a dynamic vs. static entity. It is not to be broken apart.
2. Marriage is threatened and actively opposed by our enemy Satan and God's creation is now tainted by "sin" which introduces stress into the relationship (Genesis 3-4, Romans 8):
- ◆ There is a "tension" in life as a result of "The Curse". This is true in regards to the general stream of history and this is the context within which we as human beings find ourselves today.
 - ◆ There is a special tension or "power struggle" that God said would be present within the marriage relationship (desire = control vs. rule = lead). We are "swimming up stream".
3. Marriage is to have a "structure" that allows for growth, restoration and healing (Ephesians 5:22-33, I Corinthians 11:3):
- ◆ God instructs us to "work through" this "power struggle" by assuming specific roles within the marriage relationship. The husband is the initiator / lover and the wife is the responder.
 - ◆ There is a tremendous emphasis and direction to the husband to uncompromisingly love his wife imitating the model of Christ loving the Church. He is to be the loving leader of the home, taking initiative for the growth and well-being of himself, his wife and the children.
 - ◆ Ultimately, marriage is the place where healing takes place. We all sin and have been hurt by the sin of others. This causes us to be like Adam and Eve and we do exactly what they did. In Genesis chapter three we read how they were afraid, hid themselves from God, were ashamed of their nakedness and sought to cover themselves. The chief end of marriage then is to so love and nurture (and to be loved and nurtured) that we progress toward greater "safety" so as to be naked (transparent) and unfearing (vulnerable) in the relationship spiritually, emotionally and physically.
4. Successful Christian marriage involves individual responsibility for growth and change. We will each give an account of ourselves at the "judgment seat of Christ" (Gal.5:22, 6:7, II Cor. 5:9-10).
- ◆ Christian growth is the key to improved relationships. God uses the family (marriage and children as well as other relationships) as his main instruments of helping us grow. Within families, we have the capacity to see the weaknesses in

Milan & Kay Yerkovich

each other. We can't hide from our spouses and children so; we need to learn from them. We can accept or resist this. It is a "tearing down" / "exposing" before the "building up" process can really begin.

- ◆ As we each individually mature in Christ, God's character qualities increasingly blossom within each of our lives. More love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control! These qualities allow us to create the homes, marriages and relationships that we truly desire.

As we lay aside the myths and misconceptions and lean into God's design for our repair, we then can learn to become more bonded to one another. Through a salvation experience of trusting in Christ as our Savior to forgive us of our sins, the Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit resides within us, which in turn enables us to become something quite different. As we mature in the Lord and embrace His truths, our minds are gradually transformed which results in a metamorphosis of our soul. This radical change will then positively effect *How We Love*.