

Premarital Counseling As A Critical Strategy For Building Healthy Marriages Among Gbi Members Thuan

Thuan

thuan881@gmail.com

Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Pelita Kebenaran Medan¹

Abstract. Nowadays, the divorce rate is really high. The data from the Ministry of Religion of the divorce rate really make us worried. Based on the phenomena, the writer has been encouraged to do a research and find the solution to this issue. This research is based on the the data analysis undertaken by the writer. As a counselor the writer has found several cases of women getting pregnant before getting married and the parents have urged that the couples have to be wedded to cover up the disgrace. The counselor cannot approve that for sure. According to the writer, premarital counseling can be the solution for couples who are getting married to build new households. The premarital counseling is expected to guide the couples who are getting married to comprehend the meaning, essence, and purpose of wedding. The premarital counseling can be effective and work well when going on the right track. The beginning step should be started by openness, boldness, and sincerity of couples to follow and apply the material of premarital counseling in their marriages.

Key Words: Premarital Counseling

1. Introduction

The problems that trigger the divorce rate have increased from 2009 to 2010. In 2009 the numbers of divorce couples were 216,286 and the numbers had increased to 285,184 in 2010. The writer has observed that the divorce rate has increased from year to year. The data obtained from the Minister of Religion, Lukman Hakim, in 2018 had revealed that in 2015 the numbers of divorce couples were 398,245 and in 2017 had increased to 415,898. Some of the problems in marriages which can lead to divorce are caused by the wrong motivation in building households and the lack of the knowledge of the value of a marriage. The writer is a counselor who gives premarital counseling to several couples who have happy marriages despite all the problems in their marriages.

The wrong motivation before getting married which are not appropriate to the value of marriage, such as: getting pregnant before getting married. Because the marriage does not have strong foundation so that the couple will be easily to get divorced when there is a problem in the marriage. Marriage happens because the couple think that they are mature enough to get married or because of the parents' demand so when mother or father pass away the marriage will end too. The change status of the wife from a professional worker becomes a full time mother. This can affect the family economy and if the problem does not solve well, it will lead to divorce. Marriage is based on the willingness to make parents happy. Some people get married because they are attracted to their couples because their couples are beautiful or

handsome. Because of having committed sexual relationship before getting married so that there will be a tendency to have an affair after getting married. Some couples do not have good communication and some want to have children so when they do not have children they will get divorce.

No	Wrong motivation in marriage
1	Getting pregnant before getting married
2	Getting more mature
3	Having an occupation
4	Pleasing parents
5	Having committed sexual relationship before getting married
6	Having good physical appearance
7	Having many things in common
8	Having children

Premarital counseling has become the solution for couples who are getting married to have a happy and harmonious marriage. The counselor is going to guide couples to build strong foundation in marriage which cannot be torn down when they have problems. Premarital counseling will equip couples with knowledge of the meaning and the purpose of getting married. Generally people do not know the right purpose. There is a testimony from Dr. Julianto in his book entitled 'The Equipment of a Counselor' when his girlfriend asked him why he wanted to marry her, he could not answer the question because he did not know his motivation to get married at that time.

Premarital counseling will straighten the wrong motivation in building a family. It is expected to give a new paradigm to couples who have decided to get married that the main purpose of getting married is to fulfill God's will in their lives as it is stated in Genesis 1:26-28. Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds and over every living creature that moves on the ground."⁷ God introduced a monogamic marriage where a man and a woman⁸ are bound in a marriage, they have become one flesh⁹ and are not allowed to be divorced (Genesis 2:24 For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh).¹⁰ The marriage concept in God is couples are not allowed to be divorced and it is stated in Matthew 19:4-6¹¹ except death do them apart (1 Corinthians 7: 39)¹². Marriage must be based on love. It is stated in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 that love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.¹³ The foundation of a marriage is love which consists of dedication and sacrifice to their spouses. The purpose of a marriage is to share life with spouse as a good friend¹⁴ and to accept his or her strengths and weaknesses. Husband and wife must understand their positions and roles in the marriage. Husband must love and protect wife like he loves himself and wife must respect husband. They must accept that there are lots of differences in their characters. God has created men to be logical and masculine human beings, while He has created women to be feminine human beings. Husband and wife must complete each other like a pair of shoes. The intimacy in sexual relationship should be enjoyed together in God.¹⁵

No	Right motivation
1	Marriage to fulfill God's will that is a monogamic marriage
2	Marriage because of being driven by love and sacrifice, not by demand
3	Sharing life with spouse
4	Willing to face the truth that husband and wife have different characters
5	Enjoying the intimacy in sexual relationship together

2. Research Method

This research is a qualitative research and the data are obtained through descriptive research.¹⁶ This research method is selected due to its flexibility and focus on the research subjects.¹⁷

3. Result and Discussion

Since the writer has become a marriage counselor whose job is to give premarital counseling, he has observed the marriage of couples who have decided to get married without joining the premarital counseling session. Below is the table of comparison of marriage condition between the couples who have joined premarital counseling and the couples who have not joined premarital counseling. Table. The comparison of marriage condition between the couples who have joined premarital counseling and the couples who have not joined premarital counseling.

No.	Initial	Year of Wedding	Premarital Counseling	Current Condition
1	Kel B n S	2010	Yes	Happy
2	Kel P n N	2010	Yes	Happy
3	Kel A n M	2011`	Yes	Happy
4	Kel L n N	2012	Yes	Happy
5	S n S	2014	No	Divorced
6	Kel V n L	2014	Yes	Happy
7	Kel U n M	2014	Yes	Happy
8	Kel A n D	2014	Yes	Happy
9	Kel S n J	2016	No	Divorced
10	Kel A n D	2015	Yes	Happy
11	Kel F n M	2014	Yes	Happy
12	Kel A n W	2018	Yes	Happy

4 Conclusion

The decision to get married without having clear understanding of the purpose of a marriage and the factors to get married are only the superficial factors like physical appearance, age, parents' demand and social status will destroy the marriage. The decision to get married should be based on the understanding of the meaning and purpose of marriage by joining premarital counseling. The couples who are going to get married have the knowledge

that marriage is God's will and the foundation of a marriage is love or the willingness to sacrifice. Couples should be willing to accept the differences and limitation of each other.

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