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June 1, 1978

78-87

## Sherman Says Churches Should Support Marriage

By Linda Lawson

RIDGECREST, N. C. (BP)--A societal pressure to stay married needs to be created within the church, a North Carolina pastor told 500 participants in the Memorial Day Weekend Married Young Couples Conference.

Cecil Sherman, pastor of First Baptist Church, Asheville, said that while marriage and the church used to move on parallel tracks, to be married today means, "This is the person I live with now."

"It may be that a Christian marriage today is as loud a Christian witness as a profession of faith would have been 50 years ago," Sherman said at the conference sponsored by the Sunday School department of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

One reason he said marriages get in trouble today is that society exerts few pressures to stay married. "Your marriage is no harder than your grandparents. But they had no option not to stay married."

Despite the perfect images many persons have of marriage, all marriages will be difficult sooner or later, he said. "And some of us don't know how to cope with difficulty."

Because society tends to make a joke of infidelity, Sherman said, many marriage partners do not feel a need to be faithful. And yet, "I have never found anybody who thought infidelity was funny after his partner did it."

Sherman criticized those who say similar religious and family backgrounds are not important in choosing a marriage partner. When two people have basic differences in their approaches to life, "love is not enough to hold a marriage together," he said.

He also was critical of secular counselors who say self-fulfillment in marriage is more important than self-giving.

Sherman cited five distinctives of a Christian marriage.

First, he said, doing the will of God should be the primary focus of a Christian's life, not marriage. If a couple give themselves first to doing the will of God they "are inadvertently drawn closer together," he said.

Second, the Christian should have no reservation about marriage being forever. A unique feature of a Christian marriage should be a blending of commitments and interests. Sometimes that may mean "turning down success in business for the hope of success in marriage," Sherman said.

If a couple wants to have children, they must be willing to give something up, he said. He cited his mother who quit working for 18 years to raise her three children. "My mother gave herself up for me. It may be the kindest thing anybody ever did for me," he said.

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Finally, he said, Christians should have the Bible as their guidebook for marriage rather than the latest psychological fads. While psychology may be helpful, the Christian must be sure it is in line with the Scriptures.

"Practice the basic Christian disciplines of Bible study, prayer and church attendance," said Sherman. "They will change the person you are. He also encouraged couples to build into their marriages serendipity, "ways that lift and beautify the day."

(BP) Photo to be mailed to Baptist papers by the Sunday School Board bureau of Baptist Press.  
Couples Urged To Turn -30- Baptist Press  
Conflict Into Energy 6/1/78

RIDGECREST, N. C. (BP)--Married couples may convert conflict into a major source of energy for their marriage, a professor told participants in a conference for married young couples.

Conflict in marriage may be positive or negative, G. Wade Rowatt, professor of the psychology of religion at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., said at the conference sponsored by the Baptist Sunday School Board's Sunday School department.

In resolving conflict, Rowatt said, couples should "forgive the person and fight the problem." He urged them to first get the problem out on the table, stay on the subject while trying to solve it and relate to one another as equals.

If the husband and wife cannot resolve the conflict, he said, they should seek a peacemaker, a fellow Christian and "let that person be the church for you."

Several speakers emphasized also that a healthier marriage will result from improved communication with one's spouse and with God. They noted that Bible study prayer and church attendance will strengthen relationships.

"We're not made to use each other but to love each other," added David Dean in a conference on sex in marriage. Dean is a neurosurgeon and professor at the University of South Alabama Medical School, Mobile.

"A lover needs to learn what is appreciated by his mate and what is abuse," Dean said. "Nothing can be more lonely than feeling used."

In seeking advice about their physical relationship, Dean encouraged couples to "be wary. Pray about it. Try it on. See if that advice is helpful before you use it."

Some 500 married young adults were also told that couples should plan time exclusively for each other, build money into their budgets for each to do with as they please, and to keep themselves physically fit for each other.

Ten special-interest conferences, including parenting, spiritual growth, two-career marriages, conflict management and the physical aspects of marriage were offered during the weekend. The conference theme was "Christian Marriage: Games or Growth?"

During the weekend, participants took a personality profile test and had the results interpreted to them. And each was a part of a 40-member community which met four times during the second annual three-day conference.

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Mission Service Corps  
Grows In Healthy Style

By Jack Harwell

Baptist Press  
6/1/78

ATLANTA (BP)--Mission Service Corps--a brand new baby one year ago with all kinds of speculation swirling about what it would grow up to become--is beginning to mature as a healthy, well-balanced new child of the Southern Baptist Convention.

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Leaders of the MSC implementation group, formed last fall to flesh out details of the new SBC volunteer mission program, met in Nashville recently with leaders of many SBC agencies to draft MSC proposals for June 13-15 SBC annual meeting in Atlanta.

Gerald Palmer of the SBC Home Mission Board is chairman of the MSC implementation group, which answers to the convention through the SBC Executive Committee.

Palmer told SBC leaders in Nashville: "Basic understandings have been reached between state conventions, mission boards and other SBC leadership. People are responding across the nation. As education and understanding spread among our churches, we predict that MSC volunteers will begin to step forth in amazing numbers."

David Bunch, Home Mission Board coordinator for MSC, said that more than 200 Southern Baptists had applied for MSC spots in the USA. "By the time the SBC meets in Atlanta, we expect to have at least 50 MSC volunteers approved for home mission work," Bunch said.

Lewis Myers, MSC coordinator for the SBC Foreign Mission Board, said that at least 10 overseas MSC volunteers will be approved when the SBC meets in Atlanta. Several dozen more are in screening process for overseas service.

Mission Service Corps officials say they have received 2,500 to 3,000 inquiries about MSC, which represent about 5,000 persons. Of that number, they said, about 85 are either approved for service or far along in the process, as of June 1.

Myers said overseas MSC volunteers are being given specific jobs requested by overseas missions. Volunteers are carefully screened and oriented before appointment. And their financial support is thoroughly "nailed down" before assignment.

Bunch said more than half of Home Mission Board MSC volunteers have been able to provide all or most of their own support.

"We have had surprising financial responses from some Southern Baptists," Bunch said. "One lady in the Northeast, mother of a Baptist minister, volunteered to go for two years, anywhere in America if we thought she could help. She added, 'Or I will give \$20,000 to Mission Service Corps to finance someone more qualified than I am.'"

MSC volunteers are expected to provide their own support, or have financial sponsors for their one or two year terms at home or abroad. They will also provide their own hospital insurance and retirement coverage. The overseas age limit is 68. No age limit has been set for service in the U. S.

A financial formula for sharing undesignated MSC gifts has been worked out by MSC leaders and state convention executive secretaries. That formula will be recommended to the SBC Executive Committee in June.

Persons interested in Mission Service Corps information should write to Ralph H. West, MSC Process Coordinator, 1350 Spring St., NW, Atlanta 30309.



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