

Factors That Could Potentially Lead To Marital Struggles

When working with engaged or married couples, it is wise to consider the factors that could potentially lead to marital struggle. When working with engaged couples, specifically discuss these issues so that potential problem areas can be dealt with in a proactive manner. Using a Christ-like and healthy approach will keep Satan from getting an advantage. If spouses learn these issues existed and were not informed before the marriage, they may feel deceived or bitter. Several factors that should be considered include but are not limited to:

- **History of abuse or trauma.** This may include issues such as physical, emotional or sexual abuse, rape, serious accidents, etc. This may also include the observation of such abuse between others, such as parents.
- **History or strong potential for alcohol or drug addiction/abuse.**
- **Serious history or concern with pornography, compulsive masturbation, or other sexually inappropriate behavior.** One should not assume that marriage alone will remedy problems with out-of-control sexual behavior.
- **History or concern with same-sex attraction, gender confusion, or homosexuality.**
- **History or strong potential for mental health issues.** This may include discussing someone's diagnosis and both current and past need of medication or counseling. Some disorders (bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, etc.) have a strong genetic component, so family concerns should also be discussed.
- **History or strong potential for being controlling or emotionally abusive.**
- **History or strong potential for disabilities or medical conditions that could impact the relationship.** This would include discussing known health conditions that could affect either partner's fertility, expected longevity, ability to communicate, ability to maintain employment, and/or ability to care for children.

If either of the individuals in a couple (or in some circumstances, people from either family) have any issues that may potentially be problematic for the relationship, consider talking with the engaged couple about these concerns. The appropriate response may range from admonishing them to be watchful, spending additional time counseling with them, referring them for additional counseling/assistance, having them work with a mentor, or postponing the wedding if the issues are serious and cannot be worked out.

For couples who had serious issues/concerns during the engagement, consider working closely with them following the wedding. We need to assess how the couple is doing and offer assistance before problems become serious. The first year or two of marriage is often a strong indication of how the marriage will go. If significant issues exist, offer as much teaching and support as possible.

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