

Aim of lesson

To help the young people to understand what pressures can impinge on family life and help them get into the habit of applying Biblical guidelines.

Bible background

1 Corinthians 7; Hebrews 13:4; Ezra 9:14; Matthew 5:32

Preparation required

You will need to be sensitive to the personal circumstances of the class. There are few families today not affected one way or another by marital separation, divorce or other trauma in their wider family or amongst close friends. You will have to be careful not to cause embarrassment or hurt, particularly in front of other members of the class.

The way this lesson will be presented will depend on the age and maturity of the class and you will need to adapt the lesson accordingly, omitting some topics and expanding others. It is worth remembering that young people today are exposed from a younger age than previous generations to all kinds of subjects and information. Needless to say you must be honest and open, and recognise and admit the difficulties and compromises forced upon us by human nature. The lesson will be another opportunity to reinforce the Christian principles of love, care and forgiveness discussed in the last lesson, whilst upholding the distinction between right and wrong and the high standard of behaviour which is the goal of all disciples.

Most of the members of the class will have first hand experience of the pressures that can occur in marriage; there can be few so fortunate that their Mum and Dad have never revealed their disagreements! This lesson is therefore best conducted as a discussion with as much participation as possible so that real concerns can be tackled.

Suggested outline of lesson

Ask the class to list specific pressures on a marriage and to indicate the effects in their books. They will probably identify the following and maybe others:

- time
- money
- conflict over children
- not being able to have children
- absorbing hobbies
- work for the meetings and other Christadelphian activities
- (un)employment
- sexual incompatibility
- unfaithfulness
- tiredness
- differing habits (tidiness for example)
- ambition/promotion
- relationships with wider family members
- poor health

Note that when discussing these with the class the positive and helpful aspects of some of these subjects should also be mentioned - not everything is a problem! It should also be stressed that facing and overcoming pressures can strengthen and develop a marriage relationship - indeed that is one reason why there are problems.

Next ask the class to complete the third column on the worksheet indicating what they think we can do about

the pressures. Single words such as 'balance', 'tolerance', 'priorities' will be enough on which to base discussion. There will be chance in the next lesson to go into greater detail about actually solving problems in a marriage. It is interesting to note how few of the pressures listed above are mentioned in Scripture in the context of marriage, and never as a reason for its break-up. You may like to ask the young people to try to think of examples, and then to have a discussion about why there are so few.

Relevance to our lives

As with all the lessons in this group, marriage and family life will be still in the future for most of these young people. However it is good for them to begin to think about the situation with regard to themselves rather than just noticing the imperfections of their parents' marriage. We can help them to realise that marriage is not a fairy tale but can be a real blessing with God's help.

Prayer

Loving father, thank you for my family. Help me to play my part in it, to be understanding and Christ-like in my dealings with all members of it. Please forgive me where I have caused problems. Amen.

Other suggestions for activities

This would be a good opportunity to discuss staying single. What are the benefits? How could we cope if we are left single against our wishes? How can we make our ecclesia a family for those who are single now? Philippians 4:11, 1 Corinthians 7-11.