

## **MARRIAGE MEDIATION MINISTRY**

### **A MISSION STATEMENT**

The commitment of the marriage mediation ministry called Marriage Miracles<sup>1</sup> is to deliver the Word of God to all people related to God's Design for Marriage. God's Design for Marriage is comprised of seven separate elements, each based on the Word of God. Hereinafter the seven elements of the God's Design for Marriage may be referred to simply as "the seven elements". The marriage ministry now uses these seven elements to work not only with couples considering marriage but also and primarily with couples experiencing difficulty in marriage. The ministry seeks to sufficiently prepare and educate couples considering marriage consistent with principles of purity and biblical courtship.

For couples having difficulty in marriage, the seven elements of God's Design for Marriage assist in determining the areas of spiritual weakness in the marriage without protracted counseling. The initial goal in the ministry is to discover by preliminary assessment the spiritual areas of weakness in the marriage within ten (10) to thirty (30) minutes through focused and pointed conversation coupled with the delivery of the Word related to the seven elements. For afflicted marriages, the seven elements of God's Design for Marriage are used to help the couple, through mediation, formulate a foundational agreement from which their marriage can be rebuilt and restored,

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<sup>1</sup> Marriage Miracles, Ltd. is a marriage ministry organized to do business in 2006 in the State of Maryland and under the direction and guidance of the Holy Spirit with the assistance of Paul C. Sullivan facilitating the program. With the mediation process, as opposed to counseling, the ministry utilizes the Word of God as the primary tool in rebuilding and restoring marriages in difficulty and/or crisis. The author first developed the concept of using mediation for marriage restoration in 2002 in Florida where the ministry was started with the support of several Baptist churches in Ft. Myers, primarily with the author's home church, McGregor Baptist Church.

consistent with biblical principles, so that the couple can enjoy marriage as intended by God.

Jesus Christ modeled marriage through his relationship with the church. Ephesians 5:22-33. Jesus Christ is compared to the husband and the church as his bride. In that marriage model, there is a total commitment and total submission to God and the roles and responsibilities of the spouses are clearly defined.

The first element of God's Design for Marriage is ***total submission to God***. 1 John 1:5-6; 1 John 2:4-6. In terms of priority, God is first in the marriage, then the spouse, then the children, etc. In a Godly marriage, the "self" has a low priority. Typically in troubled marriages, there is a human reorganization by the husband and/or the wife of those priorities, especially after the first-born child enters the family. Frequently, "self" takes a higher priority than God in a troubled marriage.

The second element of God's Design for Marriage relates to the scriptural requirement that the couple ***leave*** their parents so that they can ***cleave and become one flesh***. Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:5-6. Troubled marriages often involve parents who have been unable to cut the apron strings or a spouse who has difficulty separating from the parents' household. There should be separate households between the parents and a new couple without any overlap. The households should be individual units, clearly separate and distinct, without reliance on the other for their own emotional, financial or supportive existence.

The third and fourth elements of God's Design for Marriage relate to the roles of the husband and the wife. The husband's role, like that of Christ, is to be the ***spiritual leader and head of household***. Ephesians 5:23; 1 Corinthians 11:3. The wife's role is

to be the husband's **helper and companion**, just as the church is the helper in terms of the purpose of Jesus Christ. Genesis 2:18-23. Many liberal reflections on these roles lead to the faulty assumption that the roles are not equal, that the husband is dominant over the wife and that the wife must be totally subordinate. However, this liberal view is inconsistent with God's clear intent that both roles have equal value without one being dominant over the other. Ephesians 5:21. Many troubled marriages unfortunately have the roles reversed with the wife becoming the spiritual leader because the husband has failed to assume that role<sup>2</sup>. For many reasons, this dilemma occurs but can be rectified with the assistance of a sound faith-based marriage ministry.

The fifth and sixth elements of God's Design for Marriage relates to the responsibilities of the husband and the wife to each other. The husband's primary responsibility to his wife is to **love** her **and cherish** her so much so that he would die for her. Ephesians 5:25. Such is the role of Christ in the model of him as groom and the church as bride. The primary responsibility of the wife is to **respect** her husband. Ephesians 5:33. In action, an energizing cycle in the marriage is created if the husband loves his wife as it causes the wife to respect her husband which causes the husband to love the wife more and on and on in a cycle. If this cycle is broken through lack of love or lack of respect, the parties can fall into a de-energizing cycle potentially leading to separation or divorce. For an in-depth discussion of the energizing and de-energizing cycles refer to <http://loveandrespect.com> and the many resources and programs offered by Dr. & Mrs. Emerson Eggerichs.

The seventh element of God's Design for Marriage relates, in part, to communications between husband and wife in areas of conflict. It also relates to

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<sup>2</sup> Many couples are unequally yoked at the time of marriage for multiple reasons. Without a biblical courtship, the future husband and wife will not be able to carefully assess the other's commitment to God, the depth of each other's faith and whether both are in agreement as to how God designed marriage.

physical or sexual submission of one's bodies to the other. Scripture requires that there be ***mutual submission*** by husband and wife. Ephesians 5:21.

In short, a husband and wife are to pick their battles carefully and have a heart for submission as opposed to winning on every point or in every discussion. Conflict is not to be resolved by argument, but by loving communication, sharing each other's points of view and the reasons he or she believe are relevant for choosing a particular direction. In a marriage of, for example, fifty years, there should be very few, if any, major decisions made without mutual agreement by husband and wife. While the husband has the authority as the head of the household to seek a specific direction for the family, he must lovingly and with an open heart and mind listen to the ideas and thoughts of his wife, his helper. Questions at issue should be resolved by mutual agreement as opposed to being the result of constant dominance of one party or unbalanced submission by the other.

In terms of physical submission to each other, domination by one over the other is not the intent of God, especially as revealed through the Song of Solomon. God's ideas are revealed through 1 Corinthians 7:3-5 in that the wife owns the body of the husband and shows respect to her husband by giving him physical pleasure. The husband owns the body of the wife and gives love to his wife by giving her physical pleasure. God's intent related to mutual physical submission is selfless behavior toward his or her spouse. Acts 20:35. This is totally different than the secular concept of lovemaking, which is based mostly on selfish motives and self-satisfaction.

By utilizing God's Design for Marriage as exemplified in these seven elements, it is fairly easy to ascertain the source of a couple's difficulty in a marriage. Rather than devoting months and years in counseling to identify personality flaws or behaviors

created from events and traumas of the past, marriage mediation using God's Design for Marriage provides an immediate barometer for the true source of marital conflict, a disconnection with spiritual principles God provides in His Word related to marriage.

Once the source of "spiritual disconnection" is identified, the marriage mediator can work toward finding common ground for elements of a foundational agreement to rebuild and restore the marriage. Once formulated during the first session with the assistance of the trained mediator, the foundational agreement is put in writing, element by element, using the words and language of the couple, to which both have agreed. Care is given to use the couple's words and not those of the mediator. That agreement is then used as a temporary template for the couple to live into in the future until the next mediation session. At successive mediation sessions the agreement is adjusted, strengthened, and expanded until such time as the couple have a permanent template from which to live-into in the future. These agreements, or templates, must be based on scripturally sound principles.

The commitment for the marriage ministry is fulfilled through various methods. First, the Word of God is delivered to believers in accordance to God's Design for Marriage. Most believers are not aware of the seven elements of God's Design for Marriage since the design comes from different books in the Bible. There is not one neat package of scripture contained in one location that identifies the entire design. However, once the design is identified with its scriptural sources, a couple can clearly see the simplicity of God's design and can comprehend how it is possible to have a successful marriage if the couple follows God's design.

Another target audience for delivery of the Word related to God's Design of Marriage is to unbelievers. Sometimes a mediator may chose not to initially identify the

design as being that of God but save that revelation until after (1) the design is revealed in structure and (2) the couple acknowledge how such a design would, in all probability, produce positive results in the marriage relationship. Once the acknowledgement is made, an individual or couple is more readily willing to consider scripture as an invaluable guide for life. A seed is planted in fertilized soil so that reliance on scripture is more likely for the individual or couple to resolve other difficulties. Some unbelievers, through the marriage mediation process will eventually accept Christ as their Savior and ask Christ for assistance, not only in their marriage but also in all other areas of life.

The third method of fulfillment of the commitment of the marriage ministry is by assisting believers and unbelievers in developing a Biblical based foundation to enrich the marriage. Through the repetition of identifying the elements of God's Design for Marriage in a couple's day-to-day events, arguments, concerns and conflicts of the couple, the couple learns how their marriage might work better if they follow God's Design. Having memorized the template of God's Design for Marriage, self-correction in daily life is much easier for a couple.

The fourth method of fulfillment of the commitment of the marriage ministry is by providing instruction and training to pastors and other spiritual leaders so that they too can assist troubled couples by providing mediation services to assist couples. Discipleship is a critical component of the ministry so that trained mediators using Biblical principles to rebuild and restore marriages are reproduced. Instruction is needed related to the seven elements of God's Design for Marriage. Training in the mediation process is also essential. As more pastors and other church leaders are trained in Christian mediation, a much greater number of troubled marriages can be successfully and spiritually healed.

We are now seeing in our culture the results of an unfulfilled commitment by churches to honor God's Word related to restoration of troubled marriages. The continuation of the negative trends can result only in the obliteration of the family unit, which will result in the obliteration of a moral culture. The consequences of such destruction are unendingly negative. The destruction is multiplied in generational reproduction. Accordingly it is imperative that Godly Christian mediators subjecting themselves to the guidance of the Holy Spirit fulfill the commitments of marriage mediation ministries. Spirit-guided Christian mediators can assist the healing through God that is truly needed. No individual mediator has the power or strength, wisdom or art to bring spiritual healing to a troubled marriage. For this reason, among others, counseling alone is usually a deficient means of resolving marital conflict and individual sin. The mediator providing assistance must totally submit to God in his or her heart, in prayer and allow the Holy Spirit to work through him when delivering God's Design of Marriage to a couple. Pastors and other church leaders would benefit the flock by incorporating in their individual philosophy of ministry the commitment of discipleship in the instruction and training of Christian mediators in each church.

By fulfilling these commitments, families are enriched and become stronger, more positive conversions are probable, and cultures and nations can be strengthened.

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