

The Duet of Marriage

By Barrington H. Brennen, April 27, 2006

Marriage is not a solo, it is a duet between a man and a woman singing together around the piano of God's divine accompanying grace. Each spouse produces a distinct tone. A healthy marriage occurs when these two individuals, over time, have learned how to blend sweetly their individual tones to form another unique and special harmonious sound—the marriage harmony.

THE HARMONY

A duet is only made possible because each individual comes to the piano of marriage with the ability to stand alone with his or her own sound. Many have agreed to “sing the duet” of marriage, but they have not been able to form harmony. Although forming the duet of marriage is instant, having occurred on the wedding day, the harmony of marriage, though, is not by default. It does not occur at the altar. It does not occur on the honeymoon. It is not automatic. A harmonious marriage is the result of years of practice, patience, growing, adjusting, and performing. It usually takes between five and ten years for a couple to learn how to blend harmoniously.

A PLEASING EFFECT

The dictionary defines harmony as “the combination of simultaneously sounded musical notes to produce chords and chord progressions having a pleasing effect.” It is similar in marriage. Harmony in marriage is a description of a sweet, pleasing, effectiveness, brought on by a willingness and openness on the part of both performers.

As a little boy, I was fascinated with the music of one of the world's oldest quartets—the Kings Heralds. I grew up listening to them, and in particular, admiring the deep rich bass voice of Jim McClintock. The quartet had a smooth blend that penetrated the coldest heart. After 15 years of singing with the quartet, my favorite bass singer, Jim McClintock, retired and a new bass joined the group: Jim Ayers. Jim has an extremely rich, deep bass. When he talks, your toes tinkle. Although he is a great soloist and has a beautiful voice, it took him at least one entire year to learn how to sing harmoniously with the quartet. At first, his voice was distinctly heard above the others'. However, when listening to the quartet today, you can hear all four parts clearly; but neither voice is standing out as a sore thumb. They have learned how to blend. So should marriage partners.

COHABITING COUPLE

As stated earlier, many married couples have not learned how to create harmony in marriage. They have agreed to “sing” together (get married), but have never taken the time to create harmony. There is no togetherness or mutuality. They are legally married but emotionally and spiritually distant. They are no better than cohabiting couples who refuse to cross each other's boundaries. They thought that knowing how to perform “sheet music” would keep them close. Soon they find out that the music under the sheets (sex) was not sufficient to create or keep harmony in marriage. But they continue to focus on their own performances (needs) and refuse to listen to the conductor's (God's) advice: “Love seeketh not his/her own.” (1 Corinthians 13). Thus they create Disharmony.

TAKE TIME TO PRACTICE

Creating harmony calls for intentional and determined effort on the part of each singer. They must set aside systematic time for practice. When alone, they are to do physical exercises to tone the mind and body and to enhance their breathing techniques and build self-confidence. The duet spends countless hours practicing together; listening intently to the other's tone; making adjustment to volume, power, and quality of voice. The two individuals realize that although individually they can perform well and

perhaps be popular for their singing, yet, singing together is vastly different and requires different skills. Are you a harmonious couple? Are you taking the time for each other and the marriage? Are you spending time around the piano of marriage listening to the "heavenly pianist" as he works through your imperfections and weaknesses day and night, hours upon hours, to bring out the best harmony in your marriage? Have you been willing to soften your tone, breathe deeper, and study the music of marriage? Are you singing (loving) so you can hear your duet partner at the same time? If you are doing these things, then you are on the road to creating harmony in marriage. On the other hand, if you are "singing" so loudly you cannot hear your partner's voice, you are either a controller, an abuser, stubborn, selfish, or arrogant.

MEASURE YOUR HARMONY

On a scale of 1 to 10, how do you measure the harmony in your marriage? ("1" meaning very poor and "10" meaning excellent). Determine your answer privately then share it with your spouse. After answering this question, complete the following Brennen Marriage Harmony Quiz:

Select one of the following to answer each question:

1. Always
2. Often
3. Sometimes
4. Rarely
5. Never

1. [] My spouse and I spontaneously reach out for each other's hand when walking together.
2. [] My spouse and I break into smiles spontaneously when we see each other at the end of the work day.
3. [] My spouse and I enjoy eating meals together at least three times a week.
4. [] My spouse and I enjoy receiving calls from each other at work.
5. [] My spouse and I enjoy eating lunch together at least once during the work-week.
6. [] My spouse and I enjoy sharing hymnals when singing together in church.
7. [] My spouse and I enjoy referring to each other by first or pet name.
8. [] My spouse and I are considerate of each other's feelings, fears, and joys.
9. [] My spouse and I are excited to go to bed together at least three times a week.
10. [] My spouse and I enjoy holding or lying close to each other while falling asleep.
11. [] My spouse and I enjoy lingering a while after making love.
12. [] My spouse and I enjoy working together financially and building the family budget.
13. [] My spouse and I enjoy sitting together in church or other religious or social functions.
14. [] My spouse and I enjoy embracing each other for at least 20 seconds each day.
15. [] My spouse and I enjoy talking about each other to our friends and colleagues.
16. [] My spouse and I feel free to share opinions and ideas even when they are opposing views.

If you want to learn how to create harmony in your marriage call 1-242-323 8772; or write P.O. Box N-896, Nassau, The Bahamas; or email quesiton@soencouragement.org; or visit the website www.soencouragement.org. Barrington Brennen is a marriage and family therapist and a nationally certified psychologist.