

session 12: **handout**

FIVE COUPLES CONSIDERING MARRIAGE

Scenario #1: Christopher and Ashley

Christopher and Ashley met at a cookout two years ago when Christopher was 23 and Ashley was 21. Christopher had his son, Max, with him at the cookout, and Ashley was really impressed with how loving Christopher was with Max. The two of them really clicked. In fact, Ashley fell in love with both Christopher and Max. Christopher works in sales, and Ashley works as a counselor in an after-school program for youth. He brings home \$700 every 2 weeks, and she brings home approximately \$550. For financial reasons, both Christopher and Ashley live at home with their parents. Every month Christopher pays \$300 to his ex, Emily, for child support and another \$150 for health insurance. He spends as much time as possible with Max, at least 2-3 times a week and every other weekend. He and Emily have a good relationship. In fact, Ashley sometimes complains about how well they get along...she sometimes feels threatened by Emily. When she communicated this to Christopher, he told her that if he still loved Emily, he never would have broken up with her. Recently, Christopher asked Ashley to marry him.

Questions for Discussion:

1. What are the things that Ashley and Christopher have going for them?
2. What would be the advantages of getting married?
3. How might marriage affect them financially?
4. What are the things that Christopher and Ashley need to work out before they get married?
5. How do you think Christopher's child support issues will play out in their decision?
6. What could they do before getting married to make sure that their marriage is as strong as possible?

Scenario #2: Ernesto and Anna

Ernesto and Anna have a daughter together. For the last 8 years they have lived in a house that Ernesto's father and stepmother gave him. Ernesto and Anna always referred to each other as husband and wife, but they never actually got married because they could never afford to have a nice wedding. Ernesto was killed in a car accident six months ago, and his dad said that Anna could stay in the house as long as she wanted. Then Ernesto's dad died of a heart attack. His wife immediately told Anna that she had to move because the house was going to be sold.

Questions for Discussion:

1. How realistic do you think this is?
2. Ernesto and Anna considered themselves to be married. Would their relationship have been considered a common law marriage in the state of Texas?
3. How could Anna's predicament have been prevented?
4. Since Ernesto and Anna weren't married, do you think Ernesto would be considered the legal father of their daughter? How would establishing paternity protect their daughter?

Scenario #3: Elizabeth and Brent

Elizabeth and Brent fell in love in 11th grade. They broke up a few times but always got back together. They have a strong bond and enjoy many of the same things. Brent believes that no one understands him the way Elizabeth does. He just feels good when he's with her. Elizabeth loves Brent's sense of humor and his generosity. They argue mainly about how much time to spend together. Brent has always loved sports and hanging out with the guys. He also got involved with another girl one time and, although it's never happened again, Elizabeth can't forget it and tends to bring it up when she gets mad. When they graduated, Brent joined the Air Force and Elizabeth enrolled in a local college but continued to live at home. When Brent completed basic training, Elizabeth was able to go visit him. A few months later, she found out she was pregnant. They decided to get married.

Questions for Discussion:

1. What do Elizabeth and Brent have going for them?
2. What are the advantages of getting married for them?
3. What will make getting married more complicated for them?
4. What do they need to work out before getting married?
5. How will getting married impact their child support and paternity situation?

Scenario #4: Angel and Lena

Angel and Lena are young professionals in their mid 20s. Both earn around \$25,000 a year. They each have their own apartment. Neither has a lot of extra money so they spend a lot of time at each other's apartments. Both are very satisfied with the relationship and would like for it to be permanent. Angel wants to have a lot of children. Lena isn't sure she even wants to have any. But she feels sure that Angel would be a great guy to have a child with. Recently, Lena suggested that they move in together to save money for a nice wedding in a year or two. Angel suggested that they go to the courthouse and get married and then move in together. He thinks they could have a reception later. What should they do?

Questions for Discussion:

1. What does this couple have going for them?
2. What would they need to work out before getting married?
3. What would be the advantages of getting married right away?
4. What would be the disadvantages of getting married right away?
5. What do you think they should do and why?

Scenario #5: Jeremy and Lilia

Jeremy and Lilia, both in their early 20s, are in a committed relationship. Jeremy has his bachelor's degree in social work. He loves the work but it doesn't pay as much as he would like. He plans to get his Master's degree in Social Work because better paying jobs require a master's degree. Lilia has an entry level job with a small computer company. The pay is not very good but there are plenty of opportunities to move up. Lilia also has a plan. She wants to get her bachelor's degree in Information Technology, and her company will pay 50 percent of her tuition costs. Right now both Jeremy and Lilia continue to live at home with their parents. Neither of them has been good about saving. Lilia buys a lot of clothes, and Jeremy goes clubbing a lot. They both dislike being in this situation, because they can't do what they want and still have to answer to their parents. They are truly best friends and give each other understanding and support whenever times are tough. From time to time, they've talked about getting married. But both feel like they should get themselves more together before they take that big step. Last week Jeremy and his mother had a big argument about dishes he'd left in the sink. He made up his mind that he was going to move as soon as he could. When Lilia came over that evening, he was combing through the want ads looking for a cheap apartment. She could see how unhappy he was. Lilia said that maybe they should just go ahead and get married. Maybe there was a way for them to work together as a team to help each other accomplish their goals. Jeremy asked Lilia to marry him, and they set a date.

Questions for Discussion:

1. What strengths do you see in this relationship?
2. What would Jeremy and Lilia gain from getting married?
3. What are some potential problems they might encounter in their marriage?
What can they do to prevent these problems?
4. What can they do to make sure their marriage gets off to a strong start?
5. What kind of plan can they put together so they both get to accomplish their individual goals?