

# Healthy Marriage



# Love is the core of the Gospel..

“And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; this is the first commandment.

And the second is like, namely this, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.”

...but learning how to love requires  
commitment and critical skills!

# Marriage is the most intensive environment for learning how to love



***“Marriage will show your immaturity and selfishness faster than anything on earth. You either grow up or grow apart...  
It's your choice.”***

***Dr. Jennifer Finlayson-Fife***

# Marriage expectations vs. reality

## Expectations

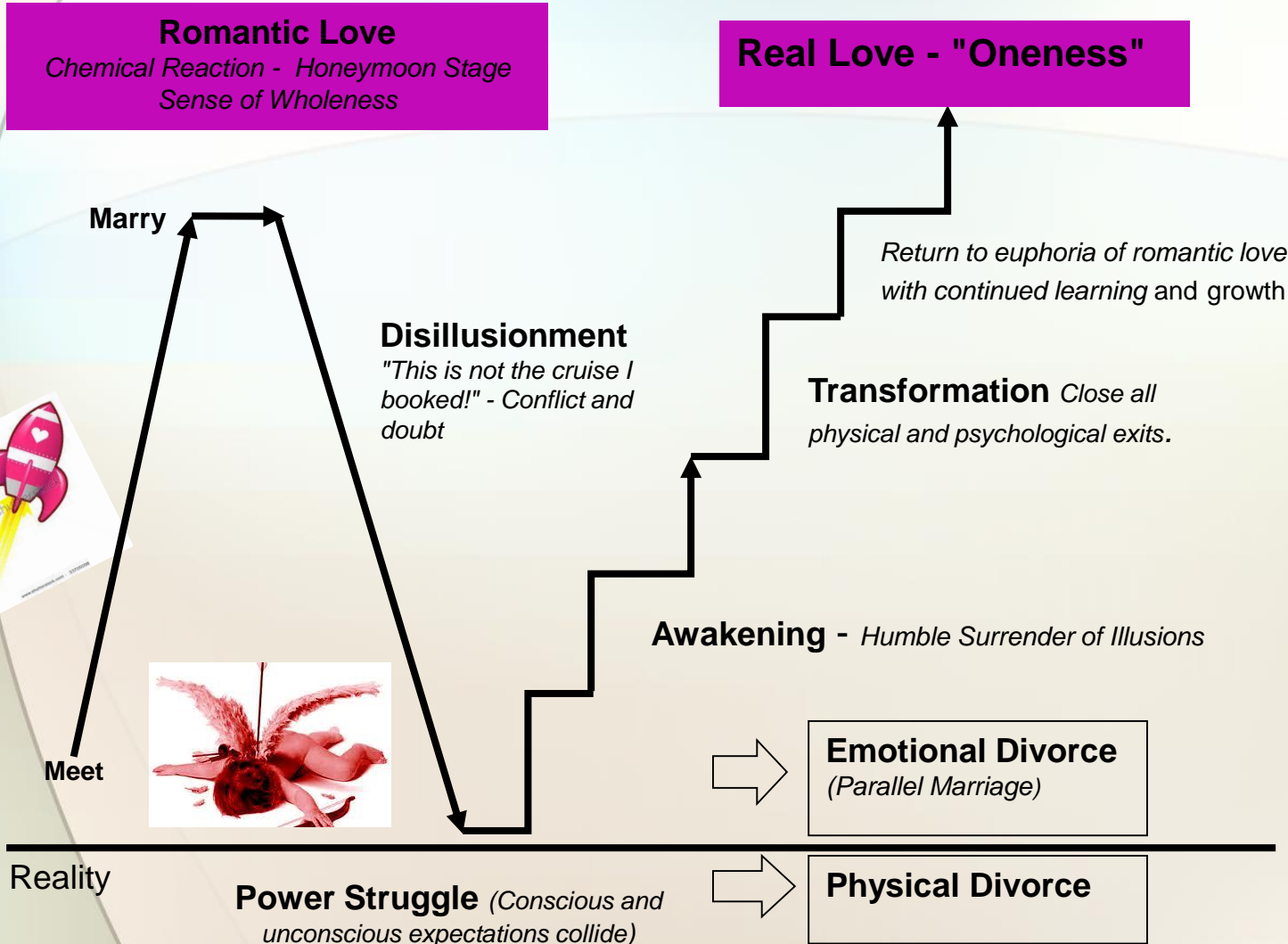
- My spouse will make me happy
- Marriage will be fun and fulfilling
- We will always feel this intense love for each other
- Nothing can separate us

## Reality

- Nobody can make you happy. And, its not their job. Only you can make you happy.
- All relationships will experience seasons of stress and difficulty
- Selfish love will perish to be replaced by real love
- Unless care is taken, any couple could suffer emotional or physical divorce

# The Psychological Journey of Marriage

Source : Laura Brotherson "And They Were Not Ashamed"



# Absence of overt conflict does not mean a marriage is solid or fulfilling

A good marriage is not smooth, and marriage is not reducible to a set of skills. People have difficulty with intimacy because they're supposed to. It's not something to be "solved" and avoided. Problems are the drive-wheels and grind-stones of intimate relationships. If we use relationships properly they make us grow into adults, capable of intense intimacy.

Dr. David Schnarch PhD

# A better paradigm of marriage

- The purpose of marriage is personal growth in a shared relationship
  - Marriage is a “people growing machine”. (Shnarch)
  - Eternal marriage implies eternal progress not eternal stasis
  - A marriage that has ceased to grow becomes brittle and lifeless
  - Growth entails risk and conflict, but also engenders intense intimacy.
- Marriage is a process for learning how to achieve a mature yet passionate love relationship
- A strong marriage involves emotional, physical, and spiritual intimacy



# Moving to a different paradigm of marriage

- The first step in improving our marriage is understanding ourselves
  - In reaching our authentic selves we can see the changes we need to make in our marriage
  - True intimacy can happen only when we reveal our authentic selves to our spouse
- Problems and conflict are an unavoidable part of marriage - it doesn't mean you married the wrong person
  - A good relationship is not defined by absence of overt conflict, but instead by growth and deepening intimacy
  - Growth always requires some discomfort and frequently engenders some conflicts



# Physical Intimacy is.....

- a) A reward for having taken care of chores and obligations
- b) A duty to your spouse
- c) An optional benefit of being married
- d) A resource to strengthen marriage

Physical intimacy is not a reward, a duty, or optional. Instead, a loving sexual relationship helps us deal with problems and resolve conflicts. Physical intimacy is closely tied with emotional intimacy and together they form the foundation of mature love.

Boundary

Pride

*"Get over here and love me!"*

Pride

*"You're not worthy of me!"*

**Healthy Boundary and  
Esteem**

Understand yourself-  
Esteem comes from unalterable  
self worth, God's love

Self-esteem

Self-esteem

Shame

*"I'll do anything, just love  
me!"*

Shame

*"My needs don't matter."*

Boundary

# What if my spouse is not willing to improve our marriage?

You can unilaterally change your marriage by:

- Letting go of unrealistic, controlling, and self-defeating behaviors
- Understanding your needs, motivations and insecurities
- Learning to make changes and requests from the best in you
- Forgiving yourself, your spouse, and your marriage for not being “perfect”
- Being aware that your spouse may not be comfortable with this change, and may even resist, but not giving up

# What you can do now

- **Assess your own marriage**
  - What is working and what is not?
  - What problems seem intractable?
  - How much stress do you have in communicating with your spouse about problems?
- **Resolve to not settle for parallel marriage or divorce**
  - See conflicts and problems as indicators that growth can now occur
  - Believe that it can get better - because it can!
- **Start learning, talking, and changing**
  - Attend a class if offered
  - Look at the materials posted at [www.loveunparalleled.com](http://www.loveunparalleled.com)
    - Use the suggested resources
  - Make time to discuss with your spouse
  - Seek spiritual guidance

