

WHEN A MAN MARRIES

by Allan A. MacRae, Ph.D.

It is easy for a person to think that a marriage is something you perform as a ceremony. You go through a wonderful day. It's done, finished. You have a life of happiness ahead of you. But marriage, like education, is something at which you have to work if it is to amount to anything.

A good marriage is not something that a minister hands you. It is not something you take by going through a ceremony. It is something you work at and build up through the years.

God has told us marriage is for life. We should go slow about getting married. We should be sure we have made the right choice. But when you have made your choice and become married, if your life is to count for Christ as you desire, you should look on it as a lifelong proposition. It will be all that God means it to be if you work at it as you should.

I remember a fellow who was doing fine work in a church some years ago. Day after day he met with different people and counselled with them and helped them. He might not get home in time for lunch. He might be an hour or two late. He was busy counselling people. He was busy carrying on the work of the ministry.

Finally, one day when he had a counselling session that lasted much longer than he had expected he found he had to drive one of his parishioners to the hospital. So instead of getting home at 1:00 o'clock when his wife expected him, he got home at 3:00. He stepped in the door and called for her. She was not there. He remembered she had a sister in a nearby state. He drove there. Her

sister came to the door and said to him, "You will never see your wife and your children again." That was a terrible blow. For the next two years he did secular work. Every so often he would come to see me and discuss whether he could get back into the ministry again. His wife claimed he had a fascination for a young woman in the church, and that had entered into her decision to leave. He himself said, "I worked so hard in counselling people and trying to help them that I neglected my wife. If I had only given as much attention to thinking of her welfare and helping her to make our married lives a success as I did to helping others in the congregation, this never would have happened." Though he wanted to return to Christian service, the last I heard he was in secular work, working on Sundays, never going to church.

It is important that a Christian who is married make his marriage a success. It is very easy if both are working and have different hours and different things to keep them from having much time together for a strain to develop. It is particularly important for those who marry to work on building up their relationship.

You will find things in your partner that you did not expect. Do not worry about it. You will find things in your partner that will rejoice your heart, things you never dreamed were there. But the total experience is going to be different from what you expected. You need to cultivate your married life in order to make it a success. If you do not it may happen with you as with the person I just mentioned. Your service for Christ will be terribly injured and even ended.

Even if it is not ended you may come to a place where you are yelling at each other and arguing all the time. Instead there should be an understanding between you that would prevent the development of such a situation. Try to reason things out, and if you can't reason things out just do the way she wants! After all most of the things people argue about are not tremendously important. They are not worth arguing over. It is far better to have peace than to have arguments and dissension.

Perhaps even worse perhaps than arguing, your wife may quietly submit to things that she constantly considers are unreasonable. This may seem to be good, or it may not be. But if she thinks it is not good and she quietly submits to it for a time, there may be cases where the wife will have psychological problems that upset her marriage and make her life a disaster.

Marriage is something that a man must constantly work at.■