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Behind the Forever: A Phenomenological Study to a Lasting Marriage

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ABSTRACT: This study is focused on the concept of a lasting marriage and to understand how couples manage to a happy and healthy relationship. The purpose of this study was to gain insight into what factors makes marriage last and the value of marriage relationship preservation. This study was based on the Symbolic Interaction Theory that marital beliefs is given its focus on subjective meaning making process and the role of social relationship. This study used transcendental phenomenology to seek and understand human experience to gain further insight of a lasting marriage. Data were obtained through semi-structured in-depth interviews, FGD and reflective diary were employed to the couple participant who had been married for at least 35 years that meets the inclusion and exclusion criteria. The recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim and assignments of pseudonyms were observed to sustain confidentiality. Results revealed that the factors contributing to the longevity of their lasting marriage were Traditional Dance & Courtship, Arguments, Patience, Acceptance, Trust, Communication, and True Love.

KEYWORDS: Lasting Marriage, Transcendental Phenomenology, Forever

I.INTRODUCTION

It is inevitable for couples that the extremities of love weaken as time goes by, which eventually lead to separation (Brown,2010). There are different factors that might lead to marriage failure. According to Coleman(2017) marriages ends to separation because of lack of investment, unforgiving, forgetting the friendship, unspoken expectation, lack of flexibility and financial pressure. There are marriages that are filed for nullity but there are couples who have chosen love over separation, they endure the pains and challenges in their married life. Bishop Gilbert A. Garcera (2018) Cited that the campaign for legalization of divorce has been resumed with vigour through all the avenues of mass media, sowing confusion and disturbance in the minds and hearts of our people. In this state of affairs, the people of God have the right to turn for the light and comfort to those whom the heavenly father has set to teach, rule and sanctify his flock. Thus, on the express interpretation of our Lord of the account of Genesis, it is clear that marriage by its nature is a union of one man and one woman for life. Furthermore, in the new testament, Christ raised the natural institution of marriage into a sacrament which signifies the great mystery of permanent union of Christ and the Church (cf. Eph. 6:25-32), and through the sacrament “the Saviour of men and the Spouse of the church comes into the lives of married Christians... [and] abides with them thereafter so that just as He loved the church and handed Himself over on her behalf, the Spouses may love each other with perpetual fidelity through mutual self-bestowal”.(Vat. II, The Church in the Modern World, n.48). Marriage therefore is regulated fundamentally by both natural and divine laws. Our Holy Father Paul VI says: “ Marriage is not the effect of chance or the product of evolution of unconscious natural forces; it is the wise institution of the creator to realize in mankind His design of love... For baptized persons, moreover, marriage invests the dignity of a sacramental sign of grace, in as much as it represents the union of Christ and of the Church”. (Humanae Vitae, n.8). This prompted the researchers to understand and examine how long marriages keep their relationship strong despite the hurdles in the relationship to inspire other couples to practice the same.

This study is conducted to determine the secret to a lasting marriage. It is beneficial and would be of great help to the couples, couples-to-be, young people and future researchers. And this research would narrate the lived experiences of the married couple for 35 years.



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II. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study is to document the secret of a lasting marriage that will give the readers an insight on how to treasure their marriage and its significance to a happy and healthy married life. The result of this study will benefit the following: Married couples, Couples to be, Researchers, Teachers/Mentors, Pre-Canal Lecturers and the Religious Community. The study of literature survey is presented in section III, Methodology is explained in section IV, section V covers the experimental results of the study, and section VI discusses the future study and Conclusion.

III. LITERATURE SURVEY

This study was based on the Symbolic Interaction Theory. This theory has been popular among those who study marital beliefs

given its focus on subjective meaning making and the role of social relationship in this process (Brown 2010).

Richard L Morgan. Believes that Jesus speaks against divorce, but the opinion of some new testament scholars the Lord is speaking in behalf of the oppressed being the women. If we recognized sin without removing the evil spirit, then we need to discover and learn the power of healing in his comfort.

Katherine S Cain. Described that people lack of awareness on the current divorce law and the fault-based system. If the previous experience is denied and bald then a more meaningful and realistic reforms could be made.

Frederick Styles. Noted that God's plan for marriage is procreation of children and love between husband and wife. the top three reasons for Christians divorcing are adultery, communication and abuse (physical and emotional). Cindy Beall. Claimed that God's power to bring back life in spite of pains caused by betrayal is possible, ask God's guidance, counselling and prayer group when the act of fooling appears to heal the family from the turmoil of deep sadness and embarrassment to rebuild trust and relationship and to protect a marriage.

IV. METHODOLOGY

To document the secret of lasting marriage of the couple participants who have been married for 35 years or more, Moustakas Method, Colaizzi and Manen's hermeneutic approach were utilized. Three couple informants were purposively identified that meets the inclusion and exclusion criteria to take part the interview process utilizing the open-ended researcher developed guide questions. Interview was recorded and later transcribed verbatim. Thematic analysis were used to identify emerging themes. The participants of this study are the selected married couples who have been together for 35 years or more from Ormoc City, Leyte, Philippines. The method outlined by Lysac et al was used by the researchers. In-depth interview Focus Group Discussion, Reflective Diary and observation were the tools used for data gathering. The interview was recorded face-to-face in a quiet room and only the participant, interviewer and the recorder were present. The interview composed of open-ended questions to delve deeply into a particular event, issue, or context that will answer to the following questions. What is the secret of their lasting marriage? What are their good practices as a couple in overcoming challenges in life? An unstructured conversational data collection approach was used. During the interview, participants were asked to recall cases where they could consider it as positive or negative effects on their married life. In addition, the researcher observed confidentiality at all times through assignments of pseudonyms. Recorded interviews were transcribe verbatim among five participants with similar experience. Exhaustion of data was reached signaling researchers cessation to collect information. (Lysack, C. et, al.)

V. EXPERIMENTAL RESULTS

The study reveals 7 major themes; Traditional Dance & Courtship, Arguments, Patience, Acceptance, Trust, Communication, and True Love.

Discussion

Theme 1. Traditional Dance and Courtship. According to some couples, they met because of bayle. Bayle is a traditional dance in the Philippines which is very popular even up to the early 80's and they also followed the traditional way of courtship before they become an official couple. Courtship in Filipino tradition gives huge importance on the value of respecting women and their families. The man cannot just approach the lady in the streets



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and ask for number or personal information, but a real man has to ask permission from the parents and pass the traditional trials given to the man before he is recognized by the family of the woman.

Theme 2 Arguments. Some couples live together peacefully and happily but in reality, they also experience fights and huge arguments within their marriage. All relationships come with struggles and in this case marriage comes with huge fights that may either bring harm to both person or do good and eventually strengthen the foundation of the marriage itself. The couple said that they see arguments as an ingredient in making their marriage a healthy and a lasting one.

Theme 3 Patience. Through the years the couples have remained together for 35 years or more. This shows that the couple possessed a great amount of patience in all aspects from time to time. The participant said that their relationship was thorough in understanding each other and made it through time of being in love together. The wife proclaims that relationship as couples proved that patience is an important ingredient for a longer marriage. They stated that it requires patience to see who really your partner is. It was not easy to gain patience in times of complications but the couples' eagerness for the betterment of their family made them overcome the passing challenges that faced them.

Theme 4 Acceptance. Marriage is not always smooth sailing. According to some experiences, one secret is accepting that both good and bad things will happen whether we like it or not. The participant stated that their relationship was complicated because there are things that they have realized later on in marriage. They know the person more after living together which sometimes results to misunderstandings but it doesn't make their love to one another lesser. They accepted their fate and accepted one's weakness and strengths. Acceptance is not easy, it doesn't come naturally but because of it we are able to realize and learn.

Theme 5 Trust. In a marriage, trust is very crucial towards the development of one's marriage. It takes lots of process to be done in order to fully obtain and justify your love for one another. The couple stated that there's a point in their life that they almost separated because the husband was a chick magnet. And now who would have thought that they are together for 35 years. Behind their love for each other there is trust working in their relationship. Trust is one of the foundation of love but also the most difficult to obtain.

Theme 6. Communication is a requirement for relationship according to the couple, not just a mere communication but a mature one. It is where you fully understand the reason why in different side even though it is not convincing and right for you. The couple also said that if you love someone, use your words and your actions to communicate it because communication will lead to a happy and healthy marriage.

Theme 7. True Love. The reasons given by a couple may vary from the need for *a blessing from God, to legitimize their union, or for the children's sake*. But one reason that cannot be discounted is that they have decided to get married because of the love that they have for one another. **Love** is the reason for marriage. Other than this particular reason the decision for marriage is questionable. Since the reason for marriage is love then the couple should understand what true love is. Love is not just an emotion that one feels for others. Love is action. It cannot just remain as an emotion. It needs action for love to work. Action is needed for marriage to work. Love is not boastful. Couples may come different cultural background, educational attainment, status, and upbringing. We should not show superiority to the other if one is lower stature. It may happen that because one is better educated or financially well off that one become the center of the family. Love should not be arrogant. In all things, the couple are equal in the family. More so the need to show one's love for the other is by way how one treats the other who lacks knowledge, who is weak in their disposition in life. We should not be proud but should learn to be humble. Love is not a rude. When we love, we become gentle. We become gentle in our words and action. There is no harshness. We talk to a baby gently. We hold a baby gently. Couples should do the same to each other. When we love a person, we do not want that person will suffer. It is not just about the gentle words and actions but also to be able "to speak word of comfort, strength, consolation, and encouragement."

Love is generous. Couples should be able to give all of their selves to each other. They should not think for one moment that they give in order to receive. Rather, think of what one can give to the other. True love can make one lay down one's life for the other. Love is not irritable or resentful. Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger (Eph 4:26). We can be angry but we should not act out our anger. And if ever anger is not controlled, if tempers flare, then "do not let the day end without making peace in the family." we cannot harbor ill feelings towards the other. It will only cause pain and suffering for the couple. Violence has no place in a home. Do not be overcome by evil (Rm 12:21). *Love forgives.* Father forgive them; for they know not what they do (Lk 23:34).



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A great deal of sacrifice is needed by the couple in forgiving one another. If there is no forgiveness the hate and ill in one's heart will remain and one day will come out of one's heart. We need to forgive ourselves so that we will be able to bestow forgiveness to others. When we forgive ourselves, we realize our weakness. Then we will be able to understand the weakness of the other and thereby accept the limitations of the other. Then it leads to forgiveness.

We should remember that we are forgiven not by our merits. We have to forgive even if we are the ones who are wronged. *Love rejoices with others*. We celebrate when good things happen to others. The couple should celebrate each other's successes. We pray that everyone around us be successful and happy. We do not pray that something bad happens to others, we rejoice in the good things that others have. It means that there is no competition between the couple. We clap when one is up and we kneel and lift up the one who is down.

VI. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK

Mainly, the key in nurturing marital relationships is doing things together and working things out by doing it with a partner and growing together as a person. Married couple may consider the five common things to forever. First, common meals, that they must find time in a day to have a meal together and both may practice to spoon feed your partner, even the old one's can do the same to increase the appetite of your married life. Second, common mind. Always consider that couple binds as one. Whatever the plans and things to do must be shared to both partners, this will develop trust. Third, common money. ATM is very popular today and jokingly termed as "Automatic To Mrs". Each couple must be able to understand that whatever is generated from the livelihood, both must know how, what and when to spend. This will develop a stronger partnership. Fourth are common manners. Never forget to say, may I, thank you and I am sorry if one commits mistake. This will develop humbleness among the couple. Fifth, common moral. "No other Man and No other Woman". Most couple are facing challenges in their relationship because of infidelity. They must not forget the promise they made together when they received the Holy Sacrament in front of our Lord that they are bind together for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, till death do as part. Couple must always pray together as one and make God as the center of everything. Future works includes the implementation among churches and other denominations, a comprehensive and enhance awareness campaign and training on happy and healthy marriage among couples, especially the youth that marital relationship comes with responsibility and maturity. Parents should be communicating well to their children about the future, with their future partners in life.

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