

Sierra Leadership Network: Month 9, Year 1

Participation in the Sierra Leadership Network (SLN) is a process of adult learning. It is the responsibility of the participant to do their assignments and seek out the necessary accountability. It is the responsibility of the participant to schedule time with their mentor, not the other way around. Here is a checklist of this month's exercises and space for comments. All useful generated materials should be placed in your Sierra Leadership Network binder. The mentor will look over the exercises and be given opportunity to add their own comments. Be sure you take your binder to the quarterly meetings at Granite Springs Church to also be available to the SLN directors.

Month 9, Year 1

Date Completed

____/____/____ marriage/divorce
Mentor Comments [Estimated time: _____]

____/____/____ pre-marriage/weddings
Mentor Comments [Estimated time: _____]

____/____/____ Marital Health
Mentor Comments [Estimated time: _____]

Participant Signature

Mentor Signature

I. Marriage and Divorce

Marriage: Check out the CRC position page on their website with the listing of Synodical studies on marriage and divorce. http://www.crcna.org/crbe/crbe_pos_marriage.htm Lengthy indeed! The amount of study history reflects the difficult effort of required to pursue a life long relationship of mutual submission, joy, and partnership in a sinful, broken world. Healthy marriage requires spiritual maturity, large amounts of grace, and strenuous perseverance.

Assignment: Write a sermon, study or lesson on Ephesians 5:21-33. Work hard on penetrating the mysterious relationship between marriage and Christ's relationship with his church.

Divorce: No one has a higher view of marriage than Jesus. Marriage is not for cowards and is given near absolute respect and honor by Jesus. Check out what Jesus teaches on divorce in Matthew 19, Mark 10 and Luke 16:18. Do some research to find out why commentators see differences between the passages.

Here is the CRC position on divorce and remarriage (short version):

Marriage is an institution created by God. It is a covenant relationship established by mutual vows between a man and a woman united by God. Permanent unity in marriage is possible in Christ and is demanded of Christ's disciples who are married. Marriages should not be dissolved; divorce is contrary to God's will. However, by persistent and unrepented sin, people can put asunder what God has joined together. Scripture acknowledges that certain actions and attitudes that occur in a sinful world and conflict with God's will can destroy a marriage relationship.

Since failure to keep the marriage covenant is sin, the church must exercise a ministry of reconciliation and call marriage partners to confession, forgiveness, reconciliation, and renewed obedience. The church must minister with special concern to those involved in the traumatic experience of divorce, speaking with clarity where sinful conduct is overt and apparent and exercising formal discipline only when there is disdain for biblical teaching and when repentance is beyond hope. The church must be a place of acceptance and support for those who have been divorced and for their children.

The church should neither issue a clear prohibition against remarriage nor attempt to list with legal precision the circumstances under which remarriage does not conflict with biblical teaching. The church must apply biblical principles to concrete situations in the light of its best understanding of what happened in a particular divorce and what is being planned for a particular remarriage.

From CRCNA.org

Discuss this position with your mentor. Is the CRC "soft" on divorce and remarriage compared to Jesus? How should the church deal with the reality that in America today there are more people currently in their second marriage than their first? How does this affect the church?

II. Pre-marriage counseling and weddings:

Most pastors will have to come to grips with the issue of who to marry, why and why not. Many couples looking for a pastor to perform a ceremony will carry with them complicated histories of sexual behavior, relational baggage, and various degrees of co-habitation outside of marriage. Pastors take different approaches to these situations. Some will ask couples to enter into a period of voluntary celibacy in preparation for their marriage in order to clarify and redefine some issues, others will advise the couple to marry, legitimizing what is happening already. The CRC has no format teaching or policy on this matter (that I am aware of anyway) and in many cases pastors will wrestle mostly with their own consciences in these matters. One should be aware of the fact that contextual dynamics affect pastors decisions on these matters and will weigh each case as it presents itself (similar to the advice given on the issue of divorce and re-marriage). In every case I trust most conscientious pastors work through these issues with each couple in order to give the marriage union its best start possible.

1. Discuss these issues with your mentor. What policies have they embraced in this issue and why?
2. Write a brief (no longer than one side of a sheet of paper) reflective piece on your initial thinking on the issue after your discussion with your mentor.
3. Check out

III. Marital Health

Professional ministry strains marriages. Marital and sexual issues rank among the top reasons many of God's servants leave professional ministry. All of us are broken, and those of us who wed marry other broken human beings. It was for good reason that both Paul and Jesus went on the record advising against marriage, yet most of us haven't heeded their call. If you are single, then you get a bye on this segment this month. If you are married I want you to do some work.

1. Sit down with your spouse and have a frank conversation regarding the following:
 - a. Both of your perspectives on the overall health of your relationship. How are you doing, really!
 - b. The status of your marital disciplines:
 - i. Are you as a couple preserving some form of "date night" every week?
 - ii. Do you and your spouse reserve at least a few minutes to connect on an emotional level daily?
 - iii. Is your sexual relationship healthy? Do you talk about your sex life (with each other)?
 - c. Are there some things that you should do to improve your marriage?
 - i. See a counselor to get help in working through a few things?
 - ii. Read and discuss a good book on marriage together?
 - iii. Attend a Marriage Encounter weekend together?
2. Have a frank discussion with your mentor regarding how you feel about your marital health.