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“Advice for Living”

January 1958
Chicago, Ill.

Question: *I live with my father who is ill. I want to marry the man I love, but I am afraid my relatives will get angry if I marry and leave my father. I have two sisters—one is twelve and the other is fourteen—who can take care of him. Should I marry?*

Answer: You are to be admired for being so devoted to your father and so concerned about his condition that you will consider postponing marriage at this time. I do not feel, however, that your father's condition should deprive you of the great experience of marriage. I am sure that your father would feel the same way. Since you have sisters who are old enough to give some attention to your father you may well alternate with them in taking care of him. It seems to me that you could very well marry at this time and have a clear understanding with your husband concerning your father's condition. You can make it clear that because of his illness you have a moral responsibility to assist in taking care of him. With this clear understanding you should be able to marry and still keep things together at your father's home.

Question: *I have been married 21 years and they have all been hell. Excuse the word, but that is the case. What can a man do to make a marriage a success? My wife will not go with me to our pastor or to a social worker. I work two jobs so that she can have anything she wants. But she shows no interest. The house is always dusty and dirty. She just doesn't seem to care.*

Answer: In advising anyone on marital problems I usually begin by urging each person to do an honest job of self analysis. Although you feel that you have done all within your power to make the marriage a success it would be well to ask yourself the question whether you have done anything to cause your wife to react the way she does. After this I feel that you should have a heart to heart talk with your wife and seek to show her the points at which she can improve and at the same time admit that if there are any points at which you are lacking you too are willing to improve. No marriage can be successful without mutual respect, abiding faith, and absolute love. If these factors are present you can work out the seemingly insoluble problems you now confront. I think you should also insist that your wife join you in discussing this matter with your minister. Often when marital difficulties develop a counsellor can be of immeasurable help in strengthening the union.

Question: *My problem is different from the ones most people have. I am a boy, but I feel about boys the way I ought to feel about girls. I don't want my parents to know about me. What can I do? Is there any place where I can go for help?*

Answer: Your problem is not at all an uncommon one. However, it does require careful attention. The type of feeling that you have toward boys is probably not an innate tendency, but something that has been culturally acquired. Your reasons for adopting this habit have now been consciously suppressed or unconsciously repressed. Therefore, it is necessary to deal with this problem by getting back to some of the experiences and circumstances that lead to the habit. In or-

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der to do this I would suggest that you see a good psychiatrist who can assist you in bringing to the forefront of conscience all of those experiences and circumstances that lead to the habit. You are already on the right road toward a solution, since you honestly recognize the problem and have a desire to solve it.

Question: *The harder I work the further in debt I get. I can't seem to get on an even keel. Please tell me what I should do.*

Answer: In order to deal with your problem it is necessary for you to get to the root of it. There are many reasons why one can stay in continual debt, no matter how hard he works. For instance, you should ask yourself whether you are living above your means. This is one of the most prevalent ways to stay in an economic strain. This simply means that the price that you pay for your automobile, home, clothes, etc., should be within the bounds of your basic income. It has been proposed by some of the best economists that one's automobile should not cost more than half of his annual income, and his home should not cost more than twice his annual income. If one follows this pattern he can avoid much economic frustration. I would also suggest that you save something every week, no matter how small your salary is. If you follow a consistent pattern at this point you will be surprised to know how much you have saved by the end of the year. With such a saving you will always have something to fall back on when emergencies arise.

Question: *I have been divorced from my husband for nine years and I have been dating a young man for six and one-half years. We are very much in love, but he feels that it is wrong for us to marry while my ex-husband is still alive. Will we be living in sin if we marry now?*

Answer: The young man that you are dating probably feels that it is sinful to marry while an ex-husband or wife is still alive because this has been a strong teaching in many religious bodies. However, I feel that religion, while remaining true to absolute moral standards, should forever help individuals adjust to the changing problem of life. The Christian Church must continue to take a strong stand on the problem of divorce which is plaguing the American family, while at the same time continuing to give guidance to those individuals who, for various reasons, find it almost impossible to live together. In the light of these considerations I would not consider it an immoral act for you and your boy friend to marry if you are in love. I would strongly advise you to profit by the experiences and mistakes of your former marriage.

Question: *I find so many Negroes trying to be everything but a Negro. Why is the Negro so ashamed of his race? Why can't you find books about Negroes in the homes of Negroes?*

Answer: A sociologist has recently written a work in which he affirms that the Negro middle class has no cultural roots because he rejects the culture of the masses of Negroes and is himself rejected by the white middle class with whom he seeks to identify. This lack of cultural roots leaves him victimized with a tragic sense of inferiority and self-hatred. This analysis, while lacking at some points, has many elements of truth. The Negro must always guard against the danger of becoming ashamed of himself and his past. There is much in the heritage of the

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14 Jan 1958 Negro that each of us can be proud of. The oppression that we have faced, partly because of the color of our skin, must not cause us to feel that everything non-white is objectionable. The content of one's character is the important thing, not the color of his skin. We must teach every Negro child that rejection of heritage means loss of cultural roots, and people who have no past have no future.

PD. *Ebony*, January 1958, p. 34.