

Dear Praying Friends in Europe,

Marriage is an institution which is based on God's word. In Matthew 19:4-6 Jesus says, "Haven't you read...that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'? So, they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate." What can we, as the church, do to support and help couples to form and maintain a healthy marriage?

Marriage Week 7-14 February 2024

Last summer, my husband Ian and I celebrated our 50th wedding anniversary. As well as enjoying time with family and friends, we felt it was vital to give thanks to God for helping us to stay the course together all this time, which we did in a special thanksgiving service at our church. In our day, there was no marriage preparation course available, but those of you who are married will know that being in an intimate relationship with a spouse is not always easy! It is only in fairy tales that the prince rescues the heroine, they get married and "live happily ever after". In real life, couples face many challenges: relational, emotional, health, financial... and many will need help and guidance on how to face these together and build a good, healthy, lasting relationship.

We all know the verses above, where Jesus sets out the blueprint for marriage, a union between one man and one woman which is celebrated in a public act and which is meant to be lasting. Compare that to the world's view of marriage, which regards it more as a voluntary, civil partnership, more like a contract, which can be terminated at any time. Recent statistics show that the number of marriages in European countries has decreased while the number of divorces has increased.



And many young people choose not to marry at all, opting to cohabit. But there are even more break-ups in this type of relationship than amongst married couples.

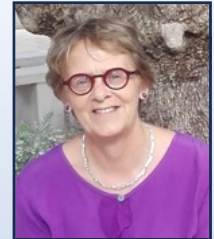
Marriage Week International draws together media, business, church, government, faith groups and in fact anyone who cares about marriage. It exists to celebrate the vibrancy of marriage as the basis for family life, and the fundamental message is that marriage is worth investing in, because research shows that stable families make for happier children and grown-ups, and a happier wider community. Activities and resources are available in around 16 European countries. As it says on their website, "We want to get everyone in the World talking about relationship skills, attending Marriage Week local events and remembering, for those who are married, why they fell in love in the first place." <https://www.marriage-weekinternational.com>

What, if anything, is available in your country, your town, your church, to help couples prepare for marriage, enhance their husband/wife relationship, or support them in times of difficulty? Perhaps we can be a catalyst to help establish or maintain initiatives and courses for those who would benefit. We can certainly pray!

Let's pray :

- for young people preparing for marriage: that they will seek and find help and encouragement to prepare a good foundation for their future together.
- for those who are facing difficulties in their marriage or a marriage breakdown: that they will find grace and sympathetic, non-judgemental help in the church.
- for those who are looking for a partner: that they will be wise in their choice of a mate, and choose to make a lifelong commitment of marriage rather than cohabitation.

Corrie Oosterhuis



Our sister, friend and co-worker Corrie Oosterhuis is now with our Lord. We would ask you to join us in giving thanks to God for her life and service. Corrie's devotion and life laid down, truly as a bride to her Christ, was and is an inspiration to all of us on the editorial team of Canopy. We also remember her enthusiasm and vision for both the sister movements of European Union of Prayer and, more recently, Europeans United in Prayer.

Corrie spent many years in service to YWAM, both in India and in the Netherlands when the Lord called her back to Europe. Let's pray for her colleagues and friends there as well as her family as they go through this time of bereavement.

Further Prayer:-

1. **Pray for the new power-sharing executive in Northern Ireland as they tackle the backlog of work caused by two years without a functioning government.**
2. **Pray for all the groups and organisations who selflessly go into dangerous areas in Ukraine to bring aid and encouragement.**

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