

The Christian Foundation of Students Exploring Marriage (SEM)

Students Exploring Marriage is an educational charity with a Christian foundation.

- SEM's aim

As an educational charity, SEM 'enables young people to explore the realities of marriage in our society today' and it is on the basis of achieving this aim, or not, that it is judged – by its users, staff, head teachers, prison governors, funders – and by God.

- The teachings of Jesus

Jesus believed that the two greatest commandments were 'Love God, and love your neighbour' (Matthew Ch 22 v36-40) and later in Matthew Chapter 25 v31-46 we are given a very clear indication as to how both of these are achieved: through feeding the hungry, inviting in the stranger, looking after the sick and visiting those in prison. These are not just acts reflecting love for ones neighbour, as Jesus states in verse 40 "I tell you the truth. whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me". Jesus said all of this in the context of how we will all be judged.

- SEM - revealing God?

In feeding the hungry, inviting in the stranger and visiting prisoners many Christians believe they should also attempt to reveal God, by for example 'sharing the Word', however Henri Nouwen (2002)¹ author of 'The Wounded Healer' believes that

"the Christian leader, minister or priest [or couple, or adviser-coach]. is not one who reveals God to his people – who gives something he has to those who have nothing – but one who helps those who are searching to discover reality as the source of their existence".

This overlaps very closely with SEM's focus on 'exploring reality' explicit in its aim, and its methods, where young people are enabled to search and discover this reality for themselves. It is therefore in the dialogue between the young people and the married couple set in the context of a school or prison that SEM's aim, methods and Christian foundation come together.

- Finally - marriage is for everyone, not just for Christians

SEM also believes because marriage is a gift from God for everyone, for all of time (- refer to Genesis Chapter 2) that SEM must endeavour to operate in an inclusive way in the context of a multi-cultural and multi-faith society².

¹ Henri Nouwen (2002). The Wounded Healer Darton, Longman and Todd

² For more on operating in a multi-cultural, and multi-faith society read 'The Dignity of Difference – how to avoid the clash of civilisations' by Jonathan Sacks (2002), published by Continuum.