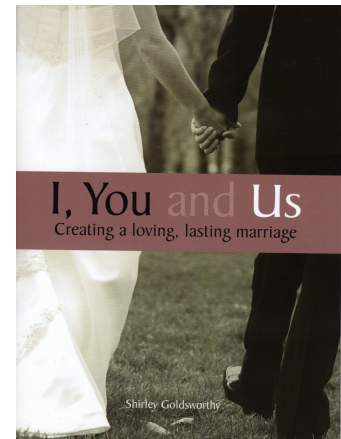


Book Review:

From Threshold Magazine, December 2009.

I, You and Us, Creating a loving, lasting marriage. By Shirley Goldsworthy

Reviewed by Kevin Andrews



The notion of educating people about marriage strikes a dissonant chord with some people. In a letter to the *Melbourne Age* a few years ago, a sceptic of education asked ‘Whatever happened to old fashioned love, the kind that would last through the years?’ Surely if couples were only more committed to each other, relationships would last.

While this sentiment may be valid, it overlooks the remarkable cultural changes of the past half century. As Norval Glenn notes, “marriage now tends to be highly hedonistic throughout the Western World and is becoming at least moderately so in many non-Western societies...”

“Given America’s (and I would add, other western nations’) highly hedonistic orientation towards marriage, their motivation to marry and their commitment to the institution of marriage must be affected by their perception of how well marriage is serving the needs and desires of married persons.”

I was reminded of these changes and the challenges they present when reading Shirley Goldsworthy’s book *I, You and Us, Creating a loving, lasting marriage*. The view that love will conquer all reinforces two powerful social taboos. First, that marriage is entirely private and not to be shared with anyone else, except in the most general way, and secondly, that marriage is natural and we all know intimately how to do it. The rise of cohabitation has reinforced the notion of marriage as a private arrangement.

There is a need to focus as much discussion on marriage as there has been on divorce. Denis Ladbrook, Professor of Social Work at Perth’s Curtin University, observed: “Given the importance to human well-being of both occupations and relationships, it is somewhat incongruous that entry to them is treated so differently by our society:

“Much preparation and all sorts of protective regulations set the parameters on who can do what in the public domain of occupations, but little preparation and few safeguards are put in place for the private domain of personal and family relationships.”

Shirley Goldsworthy’s book, *I, You and Us*, is a recent endeavour to address these challenges. Drawing on 25 years experience as a psychologist, counsellor and educator, she has written a practical book for couples and educators.

‘*I and You*’ refers to the two people, the individuals in the relationship. “A third *relational entity* referred to throughout this book as ‘*Us*’ is created through the heart, mind and body connection that forms between the two of you” she writes.

In three sections – Intimate Love; Communication, Conflict and Anger; and Individual, Couple and Family Issues, Goldsworthy sets out much important relational information, practical skills and useful exercises for couples to undertake.

It is a book that couples could work through together or with the assistance of their marriage educator or celebrant. *I, You and Us*, is a worthy addition to the library of marriage educators and celebrants. It would also be a useful engagement present for pre-marrieds or for other couples contemplating marriage.

Shirley Goldsworthy (2009): *I, You and Us – Creating a loving, lasting marriage*
[Acorn Press, Brunswick East, Victoria, Australia (71 pp pb)]

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