

“Marriage re-Branded ~ Expect Reconciliation”

8. 02. 09

Just before the services began @ the local church...

- The pews were filling up slowly with its members & a few guest that morning; when suddenly the Devil himself appeared at the front of the congregation; appearing just like you’ve always imagined.
 - Everyone was terrified & started running out the back door as fast as they could run; doing their very best to get away from “evil incarnate.”
- Soon everyone had evacuated the auditorium except for one elderly gentleman who sat calmly in his regular pew in the back row of the church.
 - This older gentleman was **seemingly unaware** of the enemy in front of him.
 - So the Devil swooped down in the pew before him & asked, “*Don’t you know who I am?*”
 - The older gentleman quietly replied, “**Yep, sure do.**”
- His casual – calm demeanor infuriated the ole Devil; a very perturbed Satan then asked, “So, why aren’t you afraid of me?”
 - The older man calmly replied, “*Been married to your sister for over 46 yrs*”

Today we are going to talk about the inevitable;
CONFLICT in marriage.

Today we want to allow God to dispel any misconceptions out there that assume;

“Once I’m married, I will live happily ever after.”

This reminds me of the woman who came in for counseling & lamented;
“I was looking for the ideal in marriage & I married an ordeal, & now I want a new deal.”

I say this as a caution, because many people today receive their **essential information** about marriage thru the secular media- -television- -& the cinema.

As a result the state of marriage is now in decline;

Countless people have lost perspective on the **importance & permanence** of marriage.

I strongly believe one of the reasons so many people are disillusioned with marriage is that *our anticipation of what marriage is going to be doesn't match the reality.*

Today we are going to open up God's word and allow His Holy Spirit to dispel this common misconception about marriage.

A *majority of us* have been brain-washed with this idea that **LOVE is always something that you feel** - - the emotions only get better w/time!

Let's do a QUICK SURVEY = *Empirically test this theory...*

Let me see a show of hands if you've been married for more than **20 yrs?**
KEEP them raised

Now keep your hand up **IF** you've never had a serious disagreement;
if your entire marriage has been nothing but marital bliss.

CONFLICT is just inevitable;
Happily married people sometimes have disagreements!

For the old married folks in our midst like **me & Becky** we've learned the hard truth;
Love isn't something that you feel, that makes you feel "*happy ever after*,"
It's something that you do!

Emotion is involved, but there's a lot more than that feeling!
In God's economy = *LOVE is a VERB.*

(R) I Corinthians 13: 1 – 7 or p. 878 in pew Bible
When I hear somebody say, "*I just don't love him anymore*," I want to say,
"Well, what are you going to do about it?"

OR

"I'm just not happy anymore," I want to say,
"What's happiness got to do with it?"

What does the Bible say about YOUR happiness?

(R) Philippians 2: 3 – 5 or p. 900 in pew Bible

Bible reinforces over and over again that this life; is not all about YOU & ME!

Maybe there is a better question?

What about the happiness of other people, *like your children?*

The Bible makes it real clear that God is primarily interested in your holiness; but not in your happiness.

“Loving God means keeping His commandments & His commandments are not burdensome.” [I John 5: 3]

God does not call us *to be* **HAPPY but OBEDIENT;**

& Happiness is a gift that comes as a **byproduct** of *doing the right thing* for a prolonged period of time.

I want to get *REAL PRACTICAL* since conflict is inevitable;
What is God attempting to teach us in the **MIDST OF HEART ACHE?**

The Bible teaches this principle on marriage;
God designed marriage as **CRUCIBLE** to develop maturity.

IF NOT the *Book of Hosea* would have never been included in the 66 books;

IF NOT the *Book of Ephesians* would not refer to Jesus as **GROOM** & the church as His **BRIDE!**

Bible is a wonderful story of *RECONCILIATION* from **Genesis-Revelation.**

Marriage is kind of like a **spiritual boot camp** at certain stages of life; It's not just for your convenience or your comfort; It's to develop spiritual muscles; to develop your character to prepare you to fight the larger battles of life.

Marriage is an incredible reflecting mechanism; your partner not only sees...the *authentic YOU* = **YOU see your authentic self** as you really are!

What is really hard in the early years of marriage is **not** what you find out about your spouse; but often what we find out about yourself.

Personal enlightenment = Soap suds from dish washer
Yrs later I learned about myself...

Did you know that Abraham Lincoln was married to a very difficult woman named Mary Todd = she had a notorious reputation as 1st Lady.

INSERT Lincoln's marriage

Gary Thomas in his book *Sacred Marriage* points out that Lincoln's marriage prepared him for his bigger mission. He wrote,

"It's easy to see how a man who might quit on a difficult marriage would not have the character to hold together a crumbling nation. Lincoln was, however determined to save the Union, & what better training ground than the difficult marriage that required such tenacity from him? Lincoln's marriage did not deter him from greatness. Some might even argue that it actually helped him to prepare for greatness, thus dispelling the lie of people who say, 'I could've really amounted to something if hadn't married such a loser.'"

God developed marriage as a **crucible** to develop character in us;
This **SPIRITUAL PURPOSE** takes precedence over our selfish interests.

God's word contains a solution for **RESOLVING CONFLICT**
in your 2nd most important relationship!

It's been kept a secret for far too long; it's the **ONLY THING**
that settles down & helps temper heated disagreements in my relationship
w/Becky.

Times of crisis - - Times of pain - - Times of stupidity;
we attempt to trust & obey this principle:
We've come to **EXPECT GOD to RECONCILE** our differences!

I. Resolving Conflict according to Jesus!

(R) Matthew 6: 33 or p. 738 in pew Bible

- Daily place Jesus at the very center of your lives = relationships & decisions
- **Results of submitting to His Lordship = ...**
 - *You begin to eliminate the sins of adultery, alcoholism, addictions, selfishness & greed that cause controversy & disagreement.*
 - *You begin to share common values - - develop similar attitudes toward vital issues such as childbearing or spending money.*
 - *Your trust* in one another begins to deepen & you learn to **TRUST** in the heart of your spouse instead of nursing negative assumptions!

Some practical suggestions on how to place Jesus at the center of your marriage:

A. Learn to pray together!

- *Most intimate* way to come together as husband & wife is learning to pray together; just praying in church once a week is not enough.
 - *Husbands*: I encourage you to take the lead in this relationship; praying does not have to be like anticipating a tooth being extracted without Novocain. ☺
 - Before you go to sleep, take your wife's hand & say, I want to have a prayer. **KEEP it SIMPLE**; give God thanks for the last 24 hrs of His watch care and provision; **PRAY** for your spouse & children.
 - *Wives*: don't be discouraged if your husband does not take the initiative; men have a difficult time expressing their emotions; keeps them guarded.
 - **INSERT]playing house**
- **IN PRAYE]** Holy Spirit goes to work **softening your heart** - - your personality - - soothing over the *rough edges* & making it easier for other people to live with you!

B. Expect disagreement ~ take off those rose-tinted glasses!

- **Jesus said**, "*In this world you will have trouble;*"
I wish marriage was immune to this truth but *it is not*.
- In the *very best of marriages* there sometime be disagreement; if handled correctly these disagreements should not devastate you but make you more Christ-like.
 - Gary Thomas in his book *Sacred Marriage* suggests, "*The absence of conflict may demonstrate that either the relationship isn't important enough to fight over or that both individuals are too insecure to risk disagreement.*"
 - Conflict if handled biblically does not raise any 'red flags,' what is unhealthy me in conflict is silence.
 - Being Christ-like **forces us to engage** instead of selfishly withdrawing:

C. Guard your tongue ~ be respectful with your tone!

- *Tell the truth* ~ stop being deceptive;
Proverbs 26: 28, "A lying tongue hates those it hurts!"
- *Control your temper* ~ **Proverbs 29: 11**, "A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself under control."

- *Monitor your tone* ~ **Proverbs 15: 28**, “The heart of the righteous weighs its answers, but the mouth of the wicked gushes evil.” [INSERT] stats
- *Be anxious to forgive* = follow Jesus’ example!
Thankfully Jesus did not choose to be happy or He would have never gone to the cross. **He chose obedience to the Father & as a result experienced joy!**

(R) Hebrews 12: 2 – 4 or p. 927 in pew Bible