

Sunday, March 5, 2017

"The Essence of Marriage" (Part 1)

THE MEANING
OF MARRIAGE

Love and the Piece of Paper

"Why do we need a piece of paper in order to love one another? I don't need a piece of paper to love you! It only complicates things."

The Overly Subjective View of Love

"Modern people think of love in such subjective terms that if there is *any* duty involved it is considered unhealthy."

Upcoming Topic: "Sex and Marriage"

In June, we will spend our final two weeks of this class to consider the topic of "Sex and Marriage" as we work our way through the chapter by that same name.

What questions or issues would you specifically like us to address? Please write them down on the attached notecard and hand it to Leah or Pastor Mark. We will take your submissions into consideration as we prepare that lesson.

You're free to write or not write your name on the card. Our sincere desire is to teach in a way that best connects God's truth with your life. We won't share any of these comments with the class.

Consumer or Covenant?

Group Discussion: Brainstorm with your table to list as many "love" words as you can!

"...the Bible teaches that the essence of marriage is a sacrificial commitment to the good of the other. That means that love is more fundamentally action than emotion."

"But the Bible sees God as the supreme good—not the individual or the family—and that gives us a view of marriage that intimately unites feeling and duty, passion and promise."



The Vertical and the Horizontal

"Horizontal" covenants were made between human beings. We see them established between close friends as well as with other nations."

Large Group Discussion:

Skim [1 Samuel 20](#) (*feel free to do a more in-depth reading later this week!*)

What are the qualities of Jonathan and David's type of friendship?

When have you experienced this level of a relationship (i.e. covenant bond) with someone?

"But the prominent covenants in the Bible are "vertical," covenants made by God with individuals as well as with families and peoples."

What is the most serious contract you ever signed? How did you confirm it?

"Why do we say that marriage is the most deeply covenantal relationship? It is because marriage has both strong horizontal and vertical aspects to it. "

Love and Law

"Love needs a framework of binding obligation to make it fully what it should be. A covenant relationship is not just intimate despite being legal. It is a relationship that is *more* intimate *because* it is legal."

"Place me like a seal over your heart, like a seal on your arm, for love is as strong as death, its ardor as unyielding as the grave. It burns like a blazing fire, like a mighty flame. Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot wash it away." (Song of Solomon 8:6-7)

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The Promise of Future Love

"What can keep marriages together during the rough patches? The vows. A public oath, made to the world, keeps you 'tied to the mast' until your mind clears and you begin to understand things better."

"Divorce is terribly difficult, and it should be, but the wronged party should not live in shame. Surprisingly, even God claims to have gone through a divorce... He knows what it is like."

"I gave faithless Israel her certificate of divorce and sent her away because of all her adulteries. Yet I saw that her unfaithful sister Judah had no fear; she also went out and committed adultery." (Jeremiah 3:8).

Journal Time: Have you (or someone close to you) gone through a divorce? Which vows or promises were broken? What were the consequences of that severed relationship? Take some time to record your reflections. Throughout this week, let these notes guide your prayers.

The Power of Promising

"[Marriage vows] give love a chance and create stability so the feelings of love, always very fitful and fragile in the early months and years, can grow strong and deep over time. They enable your passion to grow breadth and depth, because they give us the security necessary to open our hearts and speak vulnerably and truthfully without being afraid that our partner will simply walk away."

The Freedom of Promising

"...promising is the means to freedom. In promising, you limit options now, in order to have wonderful, fuller options later. When you make a promise to someone, both of you know that you are going to be there with and for them. 'You have created a small sanctuary of trust within the jungle of unpredictability,'"



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Promise and Passion

"To be known and not loved is our greatest fear. But to be fully known and truly loved is, well, a lot like being loved by God."

"For now, we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully even as I am fully known."

(1 Corinthians 13:12).

Closing Group Discussion:

Printed below is a copy of the promise statements from the Rite of Holy Matrimony in the Lutheran Service Book. Read this individually, then answer the following discussion questions with your group.

Declaration of Intent

P: [Name of bridegroom], will you have this woman to be your wedded wife, to live together in the holy estate of matrimony as God ordained it? Will you nourish and cherish her as Christ loved His body, the Church, giving Himself up for her? Will you love, honor, and keep her in sickness and in health and, forsaking all others, remain united to her alone, so long as you both shall live? Then say: I will.

R: *I will.*

P: [Name of bride], will you have this man to be your wedded husband, to live together in the holy estate of matrimony as God ordained it? Will you submit to him as the Church submits to Christ? Will you love, honor, and keep him in sickness and in health and, forsaking all others, remain united to him alone, so long as you both shall live? Then say: I will.

R: *I will.*

The Vows

I, [name], take you, [name], to be my wedded wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part, according to God's holy will; and I pledge to you my faithfulness.

I, [name], take you, [name], to be my wedded husband, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part, according to God's holy will; and I pledge to you my faithfulness.

What promises does the husband make? What promises does the wife make?

Which promises seem the most sacrificial? Most powerful? Most freeing?

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