

Review

- On your tables you will find copies of the promise statements from the Rite of Holy Matrimony in the Lutheran Service Book. Read through this individually, then answer the following discussion questions with your group:
 - What promises does the husband make?
What promises does the wife make?
 - Which promises seem the most sacrificial?
Most powerful? Most freeing?

THE MEANING OF MARRIAGE

Helping Romantic Love Fulfil Itself

"Only if you commit yourself to loving in action, day in and day out, even when feelings and circumstances are in flux, can you truly be a free individual and not a pawn of outside forces."



Helping Romantic Love Fulfil Itself

"Only with time do we really learn who the other person is and come to love the person for him or herself and not just for the feelings and experiences they give us."



Emotion and Action

- "...if we don't distinguish between feelings and actions, it can put huge barriers in the way of loving people."
- "One reason we need to make this distinction is because of the sheer inconsistency of our feelings."

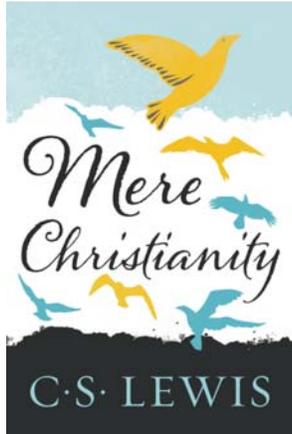


Emotion and Action

"...when we only do the actions of love when we are having strong feelings of love, we often love unwisely. Parents, out of 'love,' can spoil their children. Spouses, out of 'love,' can enable destructive behavior in each other. The reason this happens is that we are all afraid of the displeasure of the beloved."



Actions of Love Lead to Feelings of Love



"Do not waste time bothering whether you "love" your neighbor; act as if you did. As soon as we do this we find one of the great secrets. When you are behaving as if you loved someone, you will presently come to love him."

- CS Lewis



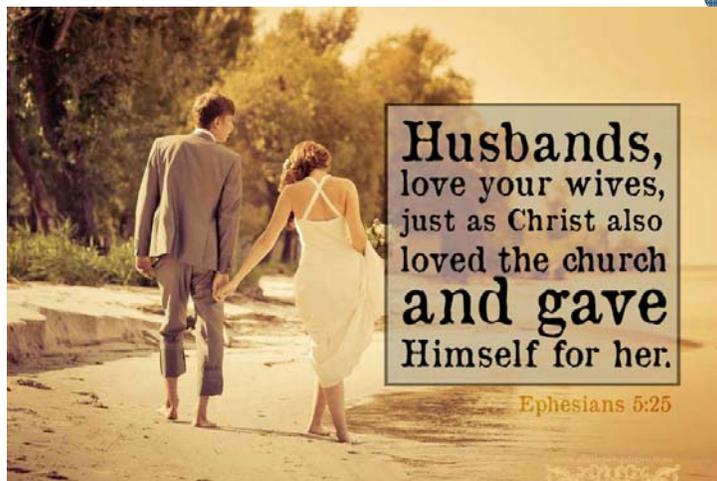
Journal/Reflection

- Who is a neighbor you need to start loving with actions? *(Even if this neighbor is hard to love or you aren't sure you love them at all!)*
- What do you think you might learn about someone while you are actively loving them? *(Or when have you learned something new about someone while actively loving them?)*



Deciding to Love

In Ephesians 5:28, Paul says, 'Husbands ought to love their wives.' He had already urged them to love their wives in verse 25, but here, just to be clear, Paul uses a verb that stresses obligation."



Discussion

- What have you felt "obligated" to do this week? When have you felt obligated to show love? (*At your job, family, home, neighborhood, etc.*)
- Is there a time you served or helped someone and it was received well? How about a time you served or helped someone and it was NOT received well? What was the difference?



Deciding to Love

"In any relationship, there will be frightening spells in which your feelings of love seem to dry up. And when that happens you must remember that the essence of a marriage is that it is a covenant, a commitment, a promise of future love. So what do you do? You do the acts of love, despite your lack of feeling."



Journal/Reflection

And, if you do that, as time goes on you will not only get through the dry spells, but they will become less frequent and deep, and you will become more constant in your feelings."

- Considering Keller's quote: How do you think loving in this way will change you? How could loving in this way change your relationships, marriage?



The Bargain

"It is almost impossible not to think in terms of how much I am putting into the marriage and how much my spouse is putting in."



The Bargain

"If you have a child, you will find that the Biblical pattern of love is forced upon you. Your new child is the neediest human being you have ever met."



The Bargain



"It is not surprising then, that after children leave home, many marriages fall apart. Why? Because while the parents treated their relationship with their children as a covenant relationship—performing the actions of love until their feelings strengthened—they treated their marriages as a consumer relationship and withdrew their actions of love when they weren't having the feelings."



Covenant

- Needs of relationship more important than individual.
- Relationship is binding, united through promise or oath.

Consumer

- Needs of individual more important than relationship.
- Expect to get more than we give, if not, we end it.

- In your group brainstorm or imagine what it would be like if a parent had a consumer relationship with their child. Get ready to share your most outlandish ideas!



Journal/Reflection

- Now reverse this process: What would it look like when two spouses practice a covenant relationship?



- What loving actions would they do even when they "don't feel like it?"



He Stayed

"Well, when Jesus looked down from the cross, he didn't think, 'I am giving myself to you because you are so attractive to me.' No, he was in agony, and he looked down at us—denying him, abandoning him, and betraying him—and in the greatest act of love in history, he stayed. He said, 'Father, forgive them, they don't know what they are doing.' He loved us, not because we were lovely to him, but to make us lovely, That is why I am going to love my spouse



Closing Reflections

- What is something new you have learned about marriage today? How has your view of marriage been impacted or changed?
- What is one way today's lesson/discussion can help you be a better spouse, friend, or family member?



WE'LL SEE YOU
NEXT WEEK!



The Mission of Marriage (Part 1)

