

Sunday, April 2, 2015
"Loving the Stranger" Part I

THE MEANING
OF MARRIAGE

Introduction

Quote from Stanley Hauerwas: "We never know whom we marry; we just think we do... [The challenge is] learning how to love and care for the stranger to whom you find yourself married."

"Marriage changes us. Having children changes us. A career switch changes us. Age changes us. On top of everything else, marriage brings out and reveals traits in you that were there all along but were hidden from everyone including you, but now they are all seen by your spouse."

What if you expected marriage to be about helping each other grow out of your sins and flaws into the new self God is creating? Then you will actually be expecting the "stranger" seasons, and when you come to one you will roll up your sleeves and get to work.

Group Activity/Reflection:

Take time to look at your reflection in three different mirrors: Distorted, UP CLOSE, and a regular mirror. Talk over these questions at your table:

1. Which reflection was the easiest to dismiss? Why?

2. Which reflection was the hardest to study? Why?



The Power of Truth—Facing the Worst

"The merged life of marriage brings you into the closest, most inescapable contact with another person possible. And that means not only that you see each other close up, but that you are forced to deal with the flaws and sins of one another."

"When you get married, your spouse is a big truck driving right through your heart. Marriage brings out the worst in you. It doesn't create your weaknesses (though you may blame your spouse for your blow-ups)—it reveals them."

"The first part of making your marriage into a relationship that enhances growth is to accept this inherent feature of married life. Marriage by its very nature has the 'power of truth'—the power to show you the truth about who you are."

"Someone Better" is Your Spouse

"It will help a great deal to say, 'I hate it when he does that, but that is not truly *him*. That is not permanent.' It will help even more to work together to agree on what is the dross and what is the gold in each other so you can say, 'This is the real you, this is the real me, this is what God wants us to be, and this is what has got to go. And we've got to work together against it.'

"...the great thing about the model of Christian marriage we are presenting here is that when you envision the 'someone better,' you can think of the future version of the person to whom you are already married. The 'someone better' is your spouse."

The Godly Tantrum

[The Godly Tantrum is] "...not an emotional loss of temper but an unrelenting insistence on being heard."

Kathy's Story: "You aren't listening to me. You don't realize that if you keep working these hours you are going to destroy this family. I don't know how to get through to you. You aren't seeing how serious this is. This is what you are doing."



Personal Reflection/Journaling:

THE MEANING OF MARRIAGE

Give each other the right to hold one another accountable.

1. Take another look in the "mirror." What do you do or not do that causes your spouse to "smash china?"

2. Or if unmarried what do you think may cause a future spouse to smash china?

The Power of Love—Renewing the Heart

"Marriage... has the 'power of love'—an unmatched power to affirm you and heal you of the deepest wounds and hurts of your life."

"...perhaps the most damaging statements that have ever been said about us are those things we have said about ourselves and to ourselves."

"To be highly esteemed by someone you highly esteem is the greatest thing in the world. This principle explains why, ultimately, to know that the Lord of the universe loves you is the strongest foundation that any human being can have."

Affirmations:

1. If married: Write 3-4 affirmations to your spouse. (You will share one this morning during class and save the others to share with your spouse sometime during the week.)
2. If unmarried: Find a partner in the room who is not here with a spouse. Write one affirmation for them. (You will be sharing this affirmation with them this morning!) **THEN** Write 3-4 affirmations to a close family member or friend. (Find time during the week to read these affirmations aloud to the person you have chosen!)



Sometimes your spouse points you directly to Jesus's love. Sometimes your spouse's affirmation imitates Jesus's love and stimulates us to more fully believe and accept the love we have in Christ. So, more than any other human relationship, marriage has a unique power to heal all hurts and convince us of our own distinctive beauty and worth."

THE MEANING OF MARRIAGE

Love Me—No, You Love ME

"The care of the children in general, and smelly, poopy diapers in particular, became a bone of contention for a good while until we began to understand the underlying dynamics operating in our hearts."

"We had observed these patterns of love currency in our respective families, and they had become part of our unconscious assumptions."

Homework!

1. Take a "5 Love Languages" inventory home with you and complete it during the week.
2. Our lesson next week will frequently refer to "love languages" so it will be helpful for you to know your **primary** and **secondary** love languages!

My Primary Love Language is: _____

My Secondary Love Language is: _____

