

## BUILDING A BIBLICALLY STRONG MARRIAGE "Part II: Staying Happy After The Wedding"

Introduction: (To show the need...)

When the minister pronounces a couple "husband and wife" at the Church altar, they can imagine only spending the rest of their lives living mutually fulfilled lives. However, a lot of couples in Litchfield County who were married just a few years ago are being crushed by the pain of broken marriages today:

(a) Torrington's Register Citizen staff writer, William Haskell reported that 464 marriages were dissolved in the Litchfield court in 1987 alone! Since I have pastored Nepaug Church in 1982, over 10,000 people have felt the trauma of divorce in our county, and that is a lot of excruciating pain for our area!

(b) A divorce attorney also told Mr. Haskell that "'Divorce is the greatest emotional and financial disruption one can experience in life'...Many area attorneys who specialize in family or domestic law have beside their desks a life stress chart that they use to warn clients about what is to come. The chart lists 43 events that commonly affect people. The number two stress event in life, right behind the death of a spouse, is divorce."

(b) Richard Fenaroli of Sandy Hook wrote a letter to the editor in the May 18, 1994 issue of the same paper, trying to urge other couples not to divorce one another as he did. He wrote: "...while the pain of this divorce experience is still fresh, I wanted to share with your readers some of my feelings and reflections with the hope that it might shed some light on what has become an overused alternative for many family relationships...I have felt the pain of burns suffered in a truck accident and have seen a loved one die in a tragic gun accident. This pain of divorce is worse...It may be sometimes tiresome, but I am telling you the tear of divorce is excruciating and much worse. Work at it (staying married) for everyone's sake... Richard L. Fenaroli."

But what about abuse, infidelity, money problems, job losses, etc.? How can anyone continue to be happy if he or she is married to such a poor partner? What if an ungodly partner divorces a godly believer -- how is he or she supposed to cope with it and stay happy?

(We turn to the sermon's "Need" section...)

**Need: "Getting married is one thing! Staying happy after the wedding is quite another! Is it possible to stay married until death parts a couple?! If one partner is incompatible, or abuses, divorces or cheats on his spouse, how can the other one even function?!"**

### I. **God provides Biblical guidelines for happiness after the wedding:**

- A. All marriage problems **start** with sin (Gen. 2:24-3:12); a couple thus starts their marriage off well by believing on Christ (Jn. 3:16) and living by the Holy Spirit's behavior control, Gal. 5:16-23.
- B. God offers the following roles for married couples to use to **stay** happy: (1) The wife is to use the Spirit's control to submit to her husband, Ep. 5:22-24,33b. (2) The husband must use the Spirit's control to cherish and provide for his wife, Ep. 5:25ff; 1 T. 5:8.

### II. **Yet, in time, evil pressures tempt couples to sin and ruin their marriages. God gives advice to counter such pressures as follows:**

- A. God offers input to thwart a couple's drift toward adultery:
  1. **Negatively**, God warns of trauma adultery yields to warn us to avoid it: adultery produces emotional, financial, health and human and divine relational trials (Pr. 5:3ff; 6:30ff; He. 13:4)!
  2. **Positively**, God proposes the following **shield** against this sin:
    - a. A man can always be "intoxicated" by his wife, Pr. 5:19.
    - b. However, (a) a man's chemical composition leaves him thinking about sex every 50 seconds (Gary Smalley, Ph.D., TV ad, Aug. 28, '94)! (c) Yet, **if he copies the world** and seeks bodily union as his drive's **only** expression, his wife cannot gratify him! (d) He may try wooing her, but the longer time needed for mutual arousal frustrates him! (d) If he seeks an immoral outlet or squelches the drive to solve his frustration, he starves his wife of craved attention to push **her** to have a sinful affair!
    - c. Scripture corrects the world's misdirection of this drive: (a) One may view his wife as "a loving doe," a metaphor used in S/S 2:7; 3:5 to picture a lover; (b) but a man must **also** see his wife as a "charming mountain she-goat," (*ya'alet-cheyn*). This latter figure is never used of love-making, but v. 19b claims that its **viewpoint along with** the "loving doe" **viewpoint constantly** equip a man to meet his needs within marriage! (c) God thus asks a man to use his drive to notice his wife's overall feminine appeals with his continuous drive! (d) She **desires** such attention and reacts to it **in time** even to request physical union (S/S 2:7; 3:5; 8:4 & 13f).
    - d. Note: 1 Cor. 7:5 **balances** this summary, teaching that spouses must shorten times between unions to avoid temptations that exploit a lack of self control! We must use common sense here!

- B. God offers advice to abused spouses who are tempted to take revenge:
    - 1. Though we are abused, we must stay married, 1 C. 7:10f.
    - 2. God however orders us to withdraw ourselves from abusers for protection (2 T. 3:5 and middle voice of *apotrepou*). So while married and **performing** their **duties**, spouses must be cautious around abusive partners! To protect from injury, one may have to part geographically for a time from the spouse, 2 T. 3:5; 4:14f.
  - C. God offers special emotional sustenance to stay faithful when one is hurt by a spouse if he (or she) relies on God, cf. Ps. 27:10ff.
  - D. God offers to quench satanic forces that fuel spousal strife (Ep. 5:22-33; 6:12) if we use godliness & prayer, Ep. 6:13-18.
- III. **Yet, one can yield to evil pressures and DIVORCE his partner. In such a case, God counsels the wrongly divorced party as follows:**
- A. Psalm 6 equips us to face any personal guilt for the failed union, and confess it to God. He then shelters one from any further stress brought on by the former spouse ("Crushed by Divorce," a personal testimony by Jocelyn Brandt (Men. Breth. Her., 3-169, Feb. 10, '84).
  - B. Then we apply Psalm 23 to find all we need to go forward in living by trusting God! When we are blinded by divorce's hurt so that we tend to make poor decisions, God guides us via the obvious "wagon-tracks" of righteousness, Ps. 23:3b! This guidance is through Scripture first (2 T. 3:13, 15-17), godly believers second (2 T. 3:13-14), circumstances third (A. 16:6-10) and what **we** want fourth (Phil. 2:12) in priority order of authority (Dt. 13:1-4).
  - C. Claim Rom. 8:28 that God **will** use this event to work **His good**!
- IV. **If WE have caused any degree of marital failure, we can start anew with personal happiness by repentance (1 Jn. 1:9)! If our spouse does the same, the marriage can\* be restored.**

***Application:** To be blessed after the wedding, (1) believe on Christ for salvation, Jn. 3:16 and (2) depend upon God's Spirit to be able to (3) obey God's Word as explained above! (4) No matter what has transpired, God supplies peace via repentance!*

***Lesson:** No matter **WHAT** has happened or **WHEN** we use it, the remedy for misery after a wedding is believing and applying God's Word! \*If couples may Biblically remarry, we substitute "will" for "can."*

**Conclusion: (To illustrate the sermon's lesson...)**

(1) Dr. James Dobson's magazine, Focus on the Family is running a story in the September, 1994 issue on the remarkable connections between fearing God and going to church and the **fulfillment** one experiences in **marriage**. Marianne K. Hering, associate editor of Teachers in Focus, another magazine published by Focus on the Family wrote the article, stating: "...scientific research is backing up what common sense has told us for years; mainly, that churchgoers live longer, stay married and feel happier than those who say they don't believe in God...Researcher J.J. Lynch, writing in The Broken Heart: The Medical Consequences of Loneliness, notes that divorced men are twice as likely to die from heart disease, stroke, hypertension and cancer as married men in any given year...people who attend church even once a month increase their chances of staying married...Christianity provides support for married couples to be committed, to show respect, to be emotionally supportive, to communicate effectively, and creates a stable power structure for the home. This intimacy solidifies a marriage romantically and sexually. Why? Larson and Mayo, after extensively reviewing the scientific literature, offer these reasons: 'most studies of marital adjustment are based on measurements of satisfaction, perceived cohesion (how close and unified one feels with the other), and how free one feels to express and exchange feelings...'

(2) What about the party who has been wronged and/or divorced by a spouse? If that party stays close to Christ, his health and well-being is apt to be much higher and better than otherwise. Hering writes: "Psychiatrist and medical researcher David L arson...published a report in the American Journal of Psychiatry summarizing 12 years of psychiatric literature. He found that ...having a relationship with God and participating in religious ceremonies...supported the view that religion benefits mental health...'The fear of God appears to function as the beginning of wisdom -- even for the severely depressed,' Larson told Christianity Today."

**Christ is the answer to keep a couple happy after the wedding. He is the answer to fulfill a spouse who has been wronged or abandoned by the other. We need to turn to Christ!**