

As Christ Loved the Church

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“ . . . and they were married and lived happily ever after.” So ends the Indo-European myth of romantic love. After the wedding there is no story worth telling. The rest of life is uneventful bliss. The real story is the excitement of falling in love, the thrill of the chase in which the lovers surmount great obstacles [they come from rival clans, they are separated by class or ethnicity, they are opposed by wicked mother-in-laws], and the grand wedding. This is the myth told in fairytales, novels, soaps, movies, television, dramas and operas.

There is a partial truth in this Indo-European myth. In a perfect world, marriage is bliss. We see this in the marriage of Christ to the church, and our eternal joy in his presence. But in a fallen world, the myth has devastating effects. The moral of the story is, find the right person and all will go well. The implied moral is, if your marriage is not bliss, start over again.

The story of courtship and marriage in the Bible is radically different. In the Old Testament God chooses Israel as his bride. In the New Testament the church is Christ's bride. In both cases, God chooses a bride who was a prostitute running after gods and redeems her. In both cases, the betrothed often turns back to her old lovers as she awaits the wedding. This drama is starkly illustrated in the life of Hosea. He was instructed by God to wed and marry a prostitute. When she returned to her old ways, he was to redeem her and restore her as his wife.

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1. Unconditional love - not contingent.

Agape love is Unconditional love: not contingent on what the other does: Haggai. Keep reaching out when you are rejected. Not conditional love in which others have to do something to earn our

love. Not a conditional commitment to give if the other also gives. Give 70% but the other must also give. Marriage is not 50/50 or 60/40 it is give 100% irregardles of what the other does

Contract

is it fair

stress rights

what do I get

Covenant

Is it love

Stress commitment

what can I give?

An unconditional covenant to give yourself fully, to the point of death, to the other.

There are no conditions, you jsut give

- not conditional, nor allowing divorce as an easy way out.

2. Sacrificial Love - to be for the other - wife and children

- Agape love is giving love: Phil 2:1-10. Gave up his station to win his bride.. 1 John

3:11-18. John 13:1-15: God so loved he gave his son,. Christ gave his life for the church.

- your covenants, not your career, is center stage and central to you responsibilities.

- die self and self ambitions and career. Christ left heaven for us.

- puts relationships above tasks. Tasks serve relationships not the other way around

= western materialism and comfort. Fine house, car, not relationships.

= task over personal relationships in the home.

- sad when there is a break, not vengeful

3. Serving Love: Mark 10:42-44. Christ as the groom washed the feet of his disciples.

instructions about leaders serving [shepherds,

- Responsible love: Responsibilities not rights: duty to provide for family, marriage is

your responsibility, salvation of children is your responsibility

- duty is the autocompas that takes over when affection is low and resentments lead us astray. It provides direction when we fly blind. Duty over rights.
- caring love

4. Suffering love: Mark 10:38.

- Not easily provoked: - keep temper, not suspicious, hoping,
- redemptive: seeks to draw other back if they fail, not kick them out or punish them.
- do not provoke your children.
- not suspicious:
- trustful l-- thinketh no evil

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“As Christ love the church,” there are few words harder for Christian husbands to hear than these. To care for, to serve, to obey, to love as the world loves pale in comparison. Paul knew this, so he addresses husbands at much greater length. What is this love that Paul calls for?

- to put your wife’s welbeing and interests above your own.
- head is the care giver in Scripture,not care receiver.
- to provide and care for the family
their needs before yours.
- to keep your family happy and wanting to stay in it, not run away or divorce.
If a divorce, you are reponsible.
- to make sure your family gets to heaven. You are reponsible for evangelizing and discipling your family.

4. Seeks the good of the other:

- seeketh not his own. Career, self desires all lower priority than covenant
- empowers the other. Shapes them for the marriage.
- give self for the other.
- your spouse is what you make them after twenty years

INFLUENCES

In 189# two couples decided to go to Liberia as missionaries. Their decision was to have a profound effect on the Hiebert clan. The couples sailed to Africa in 189#. In two years, three of them were dead for diseases. Word of their deaths spread through the M.B. churches in Minnesota and with it a call for more volunteers. One young man, Nicholas Hiebert, was in the pews and deeply convicted of the need to minister to a world in need.

- India one year
- Home mission board
- JNC and Anna Hiebert to Africa --> India.
- we are all bicultural people because of those early influences.

YOU LEARN GO GET TO CHURCH EARLY TO GET A BACK SEAT. IN SPORTS YOU LEARN TO GO EARLY TO GET A FRONT SEET.