

TALKING POINT #25
LIFE'S TURNING POINTS #5: THE MARRYING CHURCH (PART 3)

MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE WEDDING IS THE MARRIAGE

Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote to a young couple on their wedding day, "It is not your love that sustains the marriage, but from now on, the marriage that sustains your love." A good marriage takes work. While the Wedding Day is a great celebration of the moment when God joins two people and makes them one flesh by His Spirit (Malachi 2:15), the ensuing marriage can only reach the lofty heights that God desires as the couple put in the effort and are surrounded by a supporting community.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

Some of the Bible's instructions are listed below, with some comment on each.

- God makes it clear that marriage is to be *exclusive*. The marriage covenant and bed are not to be shared. Rather, the "one-flesh" is to be honoured. "Drink water from your own cistern, running water from your own well. Should your springs overflow in the streets, your streams of water in the public squares? Let them be yours alone, never to be shared with strangers. May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth." (Proverbs 5:15-18)
- The Bible also teaches the value of a community around the marriage who will support the couple. For example, in the great love song of Song of Songs, the community rejoice in the love of the couple, "Eat, friends, drink, and be drunk with love" (Song of Songs 5:1b) Also, Paul admonishes the Church in Corinth for not honouring marriage (1 Corinthians 5) and teaches the whole Ephesian Church about how marriage should be honoured (Ephesians 5:22-33). Indeed, Jesus commanded that people honour marriage and not do anything to jeopardise it, "What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate." (Matthew 19:6)
- God reveals that one of His expectations of a family is that they worship and pray together: "Impress them [His Word] on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. " (Deuteronomy 6:7)
- The great theme of the Bible is God's heart for reconciliation (eg. Romans 5:10). Accordingly, in marriage, we must continually be reconciled to each other and ensure we "don't let the sun go down on your anger" (Ephesians 4:26). Of course, sometimes divorce is appropriate but only after we've done what we can towards reconciliation and, even in that sad situation, the Church must be a place where those who have gone through this pain are not ostracised but loved.

NOW FOR US AT FOREST LAKE

As we apply these principles at FLBC, we commit ourselves again to honouring marriage – to support families through ministries like Life Groups, Men's Ministry, Women's Ministry and counselling. We commit to preach regularly about these relationships. But, more than that, we commit to being open with one another about our marriages, to ask for help when we need it and to offer help to others when they need it. It means we are a supportive community to those who are struggling and, ultimately, we carry God's heart for reconciliation, both with Him and with each other.

CONCLUSION

Every marriage can use help from time-to-time and every marriage is benefitted by an occasional "check-up." If we can help you, please see one of Pastors. Let's honour marriage together!

Next month, we'll have the next instalment of the "Life's Turning Point" series, "Crisis Points & Celebration Points."