

Avoiding the Deadly Sins of Marriage

What Happened to My Dream?

Learning What to Expect in Marriage

Grace Fellowship Church / Pastor Brad bigney / Sept. 14, 2003

Expectations! Every single one of us brings them with us into our marriage. It doesn't take long for holy matrimony to turn into holy war because neither of you have any idea of all the unwritten and unspoken expectations that are rumbling around in the head and heart of your mate.

I want us to find out from God's Word what we should EXPECT in our marriages. And to get our expectations right we're going to have to understand the PURPOSE of marriage. We have to go back and remember again what God's original PURPOSE was for giving us marriage.

I. God Uses Marriage to Show Us Who We Really Are – and to Get Us to Focus on Growing

Marriage heightens the exposure of sin in our lives and shows us who we really are. It forces us to get honest and stop playing games. It's just not easy to pretend when you live at close range in a marriage with someone.

Gary Thomas writes, "We must embrace the reality of having our flaws exposed to our partner, and thereby having them exposed to us as well. Sin never seems quite as shocking when it is known only to us; when we see how it looks or sounds to another, it is magnified ten times over. The celibate can "hide" frustration by removing herself from the situation, but the married man or woman has no true refuge. It is hard to hide when you share the same bed." *Sacred Marriage*, Gary Thomas, P. 96

Summary: Here's the problem: We come into marriage with blinders on, and God exposes us and puts a very unflattering photograph in front of our face.

Gary Thomas writes, "If you're a Christian, the reality is that, biblically speaking, you can't swap your spouse for someone else. But you can change yourself. And that change can bring the fulfillment that you mistakenly believe is found only by changing partners. In one sense, it's comical: Yes, we need a changed partner, but the partner that needs to change is not our spouse, it's us.' I don't know why this works. I don't know how you can be unsatisfied maritally and then offer yourself to God to bring about change in your life and suddenly find yourself more than satisfied with the same spouse. I don't know why this works, only that it does work. It takes time, and by time, I mean maybe years. But if your heart is driven by the desire to draw near to Jesus, you find joy by becoming like Jesus. You'll never find that joy by doing something that offends Jesus—such as instigating a divorce or an affair." *Sacred Marriage*, Gary Thomas, P. 100 & 101

This painful exposure called 'marriage' is supposed to make us hungry for grace....and desperate for God. The pain...the disappointment...the shattered dreams...the disillusionment should all drive us to God....and to His Word...and to His grace...not to another man or woman.

II. God Uses Marriage to Knock the Rough Edges Off our Lives and to Conform us to the Image of Christ

God is all about CHANGE...and marriage is one of His choice channels of change in our lives. God is not interested in maintaining the status quo. He's not interested in just allowing you to

coast comfortably through life with your spouse tucked under your arm cheering you on. God wants to make every one of us more like His Son, Jesus.

2 Cor. 3:18 “But we all with unveiled face, beholding in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory...”

Phil. 1:6 “For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.”

Marriage is all about work. It's not a stopping point. It's a starting point. Marriage is when the work really begins.

Summary: Here's the problem: We come into marriage looking for strokes, and God sends us sandpaper.

A lot of you came into marriage thinking you were finished products that were ready to be put on display in the home for all to 'ooh' and 'ahh' over. Some of you started marriage thinking you were a real 'Gem' to be laid carefully on a cloth of black velvet and handled with kid gloves. So you're shocked when instead of being allowed to simply be on display you feel the abrasive scratching of sandpaper in our lives.

In your marriage you need to have the same attitude that John the Baptist had when he said in...

John 3:30 “He must increase, but I must decrease.”

III. God Uses Marriage to Teach Us to Die to Self and Serve Someone Else for a Change

Gal. 5:13,15 “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use your liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another... but if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!”

We're all self-serving to some extent, and marriage exposes selfishness like nothing else. Marriage becomes a battleground between two people expecting to be served – and what happens is no one gets served and everyone gets very frustrated.

Summary: We come into marriage expecting our spouse to be one more person who will serve us, but God hands us each a BOWL AND TOWEL and says, “Serve one another. Wash one another's feet, just as I washed your feet.”

Conclusion:

Your happiness was never God's ultimate purpose for your marriage. Some of you are still chasing the myth of marital happiness that centers around your happiness. Your happiness and my happiness is not what it's all about. The glory of God is what it's all about. The glory of God should be central; not your happiness.

1 Cor. 10:31 “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”

And that phrase “Whatever you do” includes your marriage.



Avoiding the Deadly Sins of Marriage

What Happened to My Dream?

Learning What to Expect in Marriage

Homework

1. In specific terms, what do you expect out of marriage?
2. In specific terms, list 10 things you have done to make your marriage a success.
3. In specific terms, list 10 ways you have been at fault in your marriage.
4. In specific terms, list 10 ways you may change to make your marriage a better marriage.
5. In specific terms, write out what you would ask Jesus Christ to change about your marriage if you were assured He would work a miracle and do it.
6. Honestly evaluate the changes you would like to see in your mate. Are they really important? Do you have biblical grounds for desiring these changes? Are they for the good of your mate or just because you want them? Are you really concerned about your mate or just having your own way and making it easy on yourself?
7. Consider Philippians 2:3, 4 and Ephesians 4:1-3 and write out 5 specific ways in which you may demonstrate to your mate that you think he/she is really important and that you are sincerely interested in the things that interest him/her.

