

MARRIAGE and FAMILY

Living the Gospel in Our Lives

Session Two • Wednesday, January 16, 2019

I. The new “*I do.*”

A. Couples are tweaking marital vows to fit their current needs.

1. Serial monogamy, blended families, open marriages, commuter marriages.
2. Existing within a marriage “strategically.”

B. Marriage as a living being to be regularly negotiated, reconstituted.

1. One size does *not* fit all, as the saying goes, hence marital flexibility.

C. The same is a result of nearly half of all first marriages failing, 60% of second marriages. Skepticism.

1. So people are anxious about marriage, marrying later, some never marry (23%), and some simply cannot arrive at the *why* of marriage.
2. Also, marriage today carries with it a key component or factor of self-realization. People look to the enlargement or enhancement of the self in relationship, and so in marriage.
3. The self help movement, self discovery, has had a huge impact on marriage. *Self-referentiality!*

II. New marital promise.

A. *I want to be with you indefinitely.* A far cry from *till death parts us.*

1. In the new world of marriage, the assumption, amidst an established contract, is the possibility of it being temporary.
2. It is ignorant, or at the very least, naïve, to suggest relationships are anything but indefinite and finite.

B. Discovering: the romantic naïveté is a good thing, as well as an encumbrance to mature personhood.

1. We should put to rest the idea of marriage as anything but a journey fraught with peaks and valleys.
2. Martin Luther: *“Experience itself shows that it is no jest or game to become married. To be sure, in the first year, everything is joyful and jolly, the time is spent laughing and loving. But, later, in the development of the drama, we come to the line: ‘What misery I have seen in marriage.’ Then it is necessary to take comfort from the certain conviction that marriage is entered upon in accordance with God’s will and command, so you may confidently conclude: I have taken this woman to be my wife, God himself giving his approval and the angels assenting thereto. Then you should call for divine help.”*

III. A call for divine help.

A. The Christian church has a realistic appraisal of human nature, therefore of marriage.

1. Romans 7:14-25. The inner conflict experiences, played out with a spouse.
2. Perhaps all marriage should start with confession: *“I am truly sorry, and I pray for forgiveness. I ask for strength to turn from sin and to serve you in newness of life.”*
3. Matthew 18:21-22. How many times should one forgive? As many times as necessary.

B. *Love* in marriage demonstrates first the love of God in Christ.

1. We see Christ in the spouse, in the children raised together.
2. Such love is self-emptying, not self-proclaiming. Such love does not insist on its own way, but looks to the interest of others.
3. There is nothing “Pollyannaish” about such love as it is a challenge far beyond maintaining the romance. Because such love is not contingent on the immediate good feeling.