

What Marriage Needs

The Thursday morning news [Monday, January 27 2014] brought two stories that reminded me of the need for teaching on marriage. First, after thirty-nine years of marriage Captain & Tennille are getting divorced. Apparently love won't keep them together—not even muskrat love.

The other news item featured the state of Arkansas which now has the second highest divorce rate in the country. The study by the American Journal of Sociology considered several reasons for the high rate of divorces in the South. Blame was placed on economic hardships, lower education rates, and the conservative religious culture.

Researchers blame the pressure to marry young, the disapproval of cohabitation before marriage, abstinence-based sex education and limited resources for emergency contraception as reasons why more conservative states create less-solid marriages. That's right. The intellectuals in our society have a solution to divorce: fornication. If religious people would be more willing to promote a more sexual lifestyle to their young people, marriages would actually last longer. Divorce can be avoided with a little sexual immorality apparently. You can't help but think of Isaiah's words: *“Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!”* (Isaiah 5:20).

The solution to the problem of divorce is not more immorality before marriage—it is more maturity in marriage. While I have no scientific research or sociological study to prove that, I have witnessed the damage immaturity has on the home. The Bible's concept of immaturity certainly would cause problems for any marriage. Consider the infantile behavior as Paul described it to the Corinthians:

But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way? (1 Corinthians 3:1-3)

Notice the hallmarks of those who were infants, or immature. Paul says that the infantile Corinthian brethren were fully of jealousy and strife. He adds that they were behaving as humans.

While this text applies to the church in its context, the principles have a strong application to the home. There is no room in the marriage relationship for jealousy and strife. A husband and wife who are constantly embattled against one another is as logical as the person who constantly seeks to harm their own body. After all, the husband and wife are to become “one flesh” (**Genesis 2:24**).

The Bible also teaches that biblical marriage should feature behavior that is better than “human.” Paul compares the home in **Ephesians 5** to the relationship of Christ and the Church. Husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church (**v. 25**). No human would sacrifice himself the way that Jesus did. Wives are supposed to submit to their husbands as they would to the Lord—think “non-human” (**v. 22**). Marriage is a relationship that features two people who are patterning

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their relationship after the relationship with God. We shouldn't act merely like humans—we must act godly towards one another.

Marriages don't need more immorality before the ceremony. Marriages need more mature people who are committed to one another. Marriages need people who are willing to *“in humility count [their mate] more significant than [themselves]”* (Philippians 2:3). Marriages need husbands mature enough to die for their wives. Marriages need wives mature enough to live for their husbands. Isn't that exactly what **Ephesians 5** teaches?

Do not follow the vain teachings of men. We must continue to hold fast to our “conservative religious culture” regardless of what others may tell us it creates. Why? Because God's way works! We simply must work within His way.

Terry Francis