

Notes for the Ekklesia Meeting

Sundays @ 10:00 a.m. Info: (651) 283-0568 Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc www.dtminc.org Today's Date: April 5, 2008

Marriage Under Attack

by Dan Trygg

“But the Spirit explicitly says that in latter times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, ² by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, ³ refusing to marry, to abstain from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth.” I Timothy 4:1-3

“Marriage is to be of great value in all things, and the marriage bed is to be without contamination, for fornicators and adulterers God will judge.” Hebrews 13:4

“And Pharisees came up to Him and tested Him by asking, ‘Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?’ ⁴ He answered, ‘Have you not read that the One creating them from the beginning made them male and female, ⁵ and said, “Therefore a person shall leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will be unto one flesh”, ⁶ with the result that no longer are they two, but one flesh? What therefore God has joined together, let not a person leave.’” Matthew 19:3-6

In the book of Ecclesiastes, King Solomon observed that “there is nothing new under the sun”(Ecc. 1:9). This certainly is true of the relentless attack against marriage.

Marriage is the only human institution that precedes the fall. It is central to God's plan for humankind. **God had a job for humanity. It was too much for the man alone, so God created the woman to be a partner with him so that they could together accomplish God's will** in this world (Gen. 2:18). They were complementary beings. Each had strengths and abilities that the other lacked. **Together they more fully expressed the nature of God than either could by him or herself** (Gen. 1:26,27). Their relationship was to be a living example of the oneness, fellowship and synergy which is characteristic of their Maker. They were to enjoy a relationship of delight and full acceptance of one another, and their communion of oneness was to develop into a creative teamwork whereby they were to beautify and order the world. Furthermore, **in the union of their differences into oneness, they would be able to reproduce and multiply to fill the earth**, as God had said. New life would come from their co-joining into one.

The first attack against the union of marriage came within the Garden itself. The serpent's temptation yielded brokenness, division and estrangement in their relationship. For the first time, they experienced shame and self-consciousness. They tried to hide from each other. The union of their partnership was shattered as words of blame were uttered for the first time. Their united, voluntary teamwork was replaced by a desire to get the other partner to do for them. **A desire to control by manipulation or dominance began to disfigure the most beautiful, godlike relationship in the world into what has been called “the battle of the sexes”.** In spite of the increasing work-load, the difficulty of survival, the dissonance in the relationship, God had said that the hope of their deliverance would come through the “seed of the woman”. Adam named his wife Eve, meaning “life”, because through her would come God's answer to the death brought through their trespass. **In spite of the brokenness, manipulation, and attempts at controlling one another, and the resulting arguments and hurts, the two continued on as a team, though only a dim image of God's original intent.**

The next attack against marriage came in the line of Cain through a cheapening of God's plan for oneness. Five generations from Adam we read of the first example of polygamy. **Instead of God's plan of one man and one woman becoming one in a tender communion of unity, a violent, abusive man, Lamech, took two wives for himself.** It is significant that this development came about through the degenerate line descending from Cain, the first murderer. **Whenever polygamy is recorded in the scripture, we see also its devastating effects on the families involved.** Inevitably, there is jealousy, hurt, favoritism and positioning for power. Certainly it is destructive to the intended relationship of oneness between the man and the woman. **Full equality and acceptance cannot be given or experienced when one of the partners can be replaced, or bumped to second place, by another.**

Other age-old assaults against the oneness God has intended are premarital relationships, extra-marital affairs and divorce. In all of these, instead of a full acceptance and identification between one man and one woman for life, there is a cheapening of the value of the marriage relationship. Instead of saving oneself for a life-long marriage partner, ...where intimacy is given only within the safety of a God-centered relationship of mutual respect, and a life-long commitment to truly partner together to accomplish His will..., **we choose to disregard His plan and His way.** We open our souls and share our bodies with people with whom we have no honest, God-centered relationship, people who have demonstrated no commitment of making a covenant to partner with us. If we don't respect ourselves, or one another, enough to have a covenant commitment to partner according to God's plan, then how

can we possibly think we will have a relationship that will be fulfilling? **We become playthings to one another, temporary distractions from the frustrations of our own souls. We try to get life from one another, and when we fail to get what we are looking for, we become demanding, manipulative, or we begin to look elsewhere.** Following the “orange-juice philosophy” given to us by the world, we squeeze what we can from each other, and leave what we feel we cannot use. Of course, this leaves us even emptier than we were before, because in order to play the “orange-juice dance”, we have to give some of our “juice” as well. **In the end we are both diminished, not fulfilled. We wound one another, and we are wounded ourselves. Then, we take the hurt of failure, rejection and betrayal into our next relationship.** Instead of the openness of soul that God intended, we now have barriers of self-protection, fear and scarring, which makes true communication and partnering all the more difficult. Again, the deceiver appeals to our strong desires to tempt us to *take* what God has forbidden, ...to take liberties with what does not rightfully belong to us..., but we do not find out until later what the true costs to our souls are. **Unfortunately, innocence is lost. What has been done cannot be undone. In Christ we can find healing, and can overcome the hurts that God would have spared us from,** if we had listened to Him. Consequences are real, however, and they can follow us through life. They not only affect us, but they have a ripple effect upon families and even upon society. **Our culture is reaping the horrific and painful consequences of disregarding God’s plan for relationships between men and women.** Broken families, single parents, missing parents, poverty, loneliness, depression, abuse, promiscuity, confused sexual identity, and burgeoning sexually transmitted disease are only the tip of the iceberg of the true social costs of disregarding the marriage relationship that God intended.

Paul wrote that the Holy Spirit had communicated that in the latter days of this age people would go away from the faith because they will listen to and follow demonic teachings. Those promoting such lies will be play-acting, pretending to be good, or to have something good, but in reality they are phonies, speaking false words. Their own consciences are insensitive, having been seared and scarred by the sin they have grown up with or have personally indulged in. Interestingly, **the first teaching they promote is a withholding of marriage.** We have seen this in religious circles where **movements advocating celibacy** have looked upon marriage as a less valuable or spiritual situation in life. While there are indeed advantages and freedoms that the single person can enjoy, in terms of single-hearted devotion to God (I Cor. 7:25-35), **marriage actually calls a person to a higher level of personal and spiritual maturity than a single person typically comes to on his or her own.** Living with another person, with their flaws and peculiarities, can drive us to self-sacrifice, prayer, self-control, love and communication like nothing else. Again, **if we embrace God’s plan for marriage, we must continually be yielding to His will, and seek to learn how to work together to help one another grow and function for the Kingdom as a team.** This requires skills and character that few single people develop.

In our day, the withholding of marriage is expressed more in the area of just choosing not to marry. Living together has become increasingly popular in our culture. **This is not love. It is based purely on self-interest and personal irresponsibility.** Why would you *not* want to make a legally binding covenant that would potentially benefit your partner, unless you had no intention of keeping it? Let’s be honest. The reason most people don’t *want* to take the step to marry is that they don’t want the responsibility and mess involved if the relationship should *not* work out. Again, this is not love. Love does not seek its own, but the good of the other person (I Cor. 13:5; Rom. 13:10). **The Bible says that such “withholding of marriage” is demonically inspired.** Jesus warned against false teachers in Matt. 7:15,16. He told us we would be able to discern such liars by watching the fruit of their teachings. It is abundantly clear that the free love, casual sex, or even “trial marriage” philosophy has produced personal and sociological damage on an incredibly extensive scale.

God’s word exhorts us to hold marriage in high esteem. It is a very serious and precious relationship, nothing to be treated lightly. Nor is it a relationship that is to be defiled by promiscuity, either past or present. God Himself promises to judge those who are sexually promiscuous. Virtually all of us have been affected by the moral corruption of our times. **What do we do, if we have been guilty of premarital relationships, or adulterous affairs?** What do we do if we have been living in a relationship that is outside of God’s will? As in other areas of life, the first word of the Good News invitation is “Repent”. **We must acknowledge that our worldview and behavior have not been in synch with God’s will.** Secondly, we must *put off* any attitudes and actions that undermine and devalue God’s plan for men/women relationships. They can have no place in our lives, if we are to follow Jesus. Third, know that God says He will forgive us for our past actions, though there still may be hurts and consequences of our past choices to work through. **Finally, we must commit ourselves afresh to walk in obedience to God in this area.** We will best overcome the attack against marriage in our culture by visibly living truly God-honoring lives in our relationships.