

When Sinners Say “I Do”

Lesson 3

1. To this point we've pointed out a couple of things that helps us understand the dynamics involved in a successful marriage:
 - The problems we face in marriage are not usually the result of an outside influence, but the consequence of an internal spiritual condition: we are sinners, and its sinners that say “I do”!
 - One issue that gives rise to major marital conflict is the confusion between wants and needs: a need is something necessary for our physical and spiritual survival ... a want is something we wish for or a desire to make our life more comfortable.
 - All husbands WANT respect and all wives WANT love, yet neither of these (respect and love) are NEEDED for our physical or spiritual survival – we can obey God (and even thrive spiritually) when these are missing from our marriage relationship.
2. *“Marriage, after all, is just life in a particularly concentrated form.”* (pg. 46)
 - Gal. 5:17 – the two sides of the war within: clash of desires (flesh vs. Spirit)

CASE STUDY: Bart & Jasmine were having their annual argument over vacation destinations. Bart is a lover of the outdoors and a “penny-pincher” – he’s convinced that the family should take 10 days to camp (rough it) through the Blue Ridge Mountains of VA. Jasmine is not a “vacationer” but someone who loves to spend time with family (parents, siblings, cousins) – she votes that they spend their vacation at her parents place. This year neither is willing to back off or compromise; their heated “discussions” can be heard by the children late into the night on some weekends. What is the solution and what does this teach us about marital relationships?

The potential for “fleshly” responses is huge ... using Gal. 5:17-21, what form would the flesh manifest in a scenario such as this?

“The cause of our marriage battles ... is neither our marriage nor our spouse. It’s the sin in our hearts – entirely, totally, exclusively, without exception.” (pg. 51) Agree or disagree?

- Read James 4:1-3 & Romans 7:22-23 – usually we’re experts at finding the “law of sin” at work in our spouses, but not so sharp at noticing its activity in us.

Why?

What if Bart or Jasmine said: “I can’t help it that I find no satisfaction camping/spending time at the in-laws. That’s just the way I am!” How do we differentiate between the unchangeable aspects of our humanity and our fleshly desires? What are the characteristics of our personality that can or cannot be changed? Do we overlook these things or are we accountable to God for them?

3. Three things to remember about the sin that dwells within us:
 - Sin is inherently deceitful – the ultimate spiritual con game.
 - Sin will tempt you to think of yourself as a perpetual victim in a bad marriage, and that God is unjust, insane and disconnected from reality.
 - Sinful behaviors and responses in marriage promise peace, freedom, and satisfaction, but deliver insecurity, bondage and anxiety in the life of a believer.

4. Take this doctrine out for a spin:

Are there struggles against sin of this magnitude in a spiritually blended marriage? Why or why not?

- In humility, suspect yourself – our heart has the permanent tendency to oppose God. (Jer. 17:9)

Based on what you've learned to this point, what's wrong with the expression, "God knows my heart in this situation"?

- In integrity, inspect yourself – the issue is not "who is right/wrong" but "what is right/wrong" (See Mt. 7:3-5)

How does the pursuit of who's "more at fault" hurt our marriages?

- In honesty, blame yourself – God will create opportunities to reveal and then deal with personal sin.

How does the "heat" of marriage reveal the heart of a husband or wife?