

When Sinners Say “I Do”

Lesson 9

1. The plot of a Jane Austen novel (*Pride and Prejudice, Sense and Sensibility*)

“Start with an anxious, unmarried woman in late eighteenth-century England whose mom is wound up even tighter than she is. Bring in a clueless guy, also usually rich and unexplainably single, who doesn’t know he needs the temperamental unmarried woman to make him normal. Throw in some eccentric characters, frilly clothes, a formal ball, and lots of soggy English countryside. End with a deliriously happy wedding, leaving the distinct impression that this couple will never know anything but harmonious marital bliss. Cut to credits, cue the violins, go buy the soundtrack.” (Harvey, pg. 136)

SEQUALS:

- Sense and sensibility, Episode 2 – I Miss My Mom
- Pride and Prejudice, the Sequel – Darcy’s Hunting Buddies Move In
- Emma Returns: The Matchmaker Strikes Again!

- a. What sustains a marriage after the initial infusion of love, romance, care, and thoughtfulness?
- b. GRACE – the power of God displayed in the activities, beliefs, and emotions of a married believer that frees them from the power of sin.

2. What the GRACE of God means to sinners who say “I Do” (Titus 2:11-14)

How would you define grace? How do you think God’s grace works after salvation?

- a. God’s GRACE begins with the Savior – the embodiment of grace, the fountain of grace.
 - **Saving** grace and **sanctifying** grace are the same grace – the same power of God used to free you from sin’s penalty is the same power of God used to free you from sin’s practice.
 - Just like the Gospel includes the good news of God’s power to free a sinner from sin’s penalty, so the Gospel includes the good news that God is willing, able, and determined to free His children from sin’s practice!
 - Grace is the persistent power of God at work in us, gradually and incrementally, so that we can patiently but diligently run the “marriage race” set before us.
- b. God’s GRACE works in us to renounce the old (See vs. 12a)
 - Here is the job description of GRACE – grace is given to teach us how to live in the unique, individual, moment-by-moment lives we all lead.
 - “Teaching us” or “Instructing us” (NASB) or “Training us” (ESV) is the word used in Heb. 12:6, 7, 10 to convey the idea of disciplined instruction complete with knowledge imparted, expectations communicated and consequences applied.
 - The word is *present active* meaning continuous action – God’s grace is stubborn and relentless!

c. God's GRACE works in us to embrace the new (See vs. 12b)

- "Live" means to be alive, to have life, to be living – describes God and His creation.
- This life empowered by God's grace enables us to live:
 1. **Soberly** – (sophronos) with sensibility or with a sound mind
 2. **Righteously** – (dikainos) with equity or justice
 3. **Godly** – (eusebos) with religious devotion or with a devotion to the proper expression of religious beliefs.

Why are these three qualities important in marriage? ("soberly" brings stability to a marriage relationship, "righteously" prevents selfishness, "godly" matches one's profession with one's actions)

In what ways are these qualities missing prior to saying "I Do"?

d. God's GRACE works in us patience (See vs. 13)

- We live in our married state waiting for Christ to return!

Give several reasons why a married couple would wait expectantly for Christ's return... (Besides the eternal implications, there are struggles in marriage that would be brought to an end; it's not easy being sensible, just or pious in every moment; God does not promise to subdue every sin or create unbroken harmony in our marriages in this life)

- Our marriage is the tangible expression of Christ's relationship to His human creation – we glorify God in our marriage while we wait for our spiritual marriage to Christ.
- HOW? By experiencing God's power to live sensibly, righteously, and piously with another sinner in the bond of marriage!

e. God's GRACE works in us a zeal for "good works" (See vs. 14)

- Zeal is desire on steroids – it's the football fan who paints his body the team colors and gladly sits in sub-freezing weather shirtless.
- Grace excavates all the way down to our core desires and transforms our marriages into testimonies of God's love and power.

How important to your marriage is "desire" for good works vs. "duty" to perform good works?

Which communicates more commitment in marriage: desire or duty? Why?

3. Four things to keep in mind when we think of how the grace of God affects our marriages:

- a. **We are inclined to drift from grace to self-effort** – remind yourself that it is only by God's power (His grace) that you can live harmoniously with your spouse.

- b. **We are inclined to become discouraged with the pace of change in our marriage** – remind yourself that God’s grace is persistent in the believer if not visible at the moment.
- God’s grace works below the surface first
 - Celebrate what you can see, even if it is not directly related to the change you hope for
 - Review the game plan for change
- c. **We are inclined to lose sight of the ultimate goal** – remind yourself that this life is preparation for the next.
- d. **We are inclined to forget the God of all grace** – remind yourself that it is God (not your own effort) that is the real power behind your progress and direction.
4. ***“The grace of God has appeared with a power so stubborn that it will not allow sin to ultimately win. That’s remarkable news for the journey of marriage.”*** (Harvey, pg. 150)

How does Philippians 2:12-13 add to our understanding of God’s grace in marriage?