

When Sinners Say “I Do”

Lesson 12

1. In Troy, MI, at White Chapel Cemetery there’s a burial plaque for Ryan Settlemoir, 28, who died June 12 from the H1N1 virus – he left behind a 4-year-old-son and twin daughters. He and Alicia were married 8 years; I performed their wedding ceremony.
 - I’m running the risk of being morbid this AM, but all married couples today have the high probability that their marriage will end in either divorce or death.
 - Richard Baxter (Puritan): One of the goals of marriage is “... to prepare each other for the approach of death, and comfort each other in the hopes of eternal life.”
 - In light of the fact that God is using a concentrated form of life (our marriage) to sanctify us and prepare us for eternity, it’s good for us to consider again how marriage does such a thing.

2. 2 Cor. 4:5-18 lays out a stark reality ... husbands and wives live in a body made of very fragile material!
 - The “earthen vessel” is nothing more than a clay pot (“dime a dozen”) – we might use the expression **paper cup** (inexpensive, disposable, flimsy, not as important as what it contains).
 - Our bodies are in constant decline – we’re the “well-worn” version of our old self!

Do you ever play the “Remember when ...” game with your spouse?

What are some of the aging issues married couples will need to address as they grow older?

How much attention should married people give to their own and/or their spouse’s physical appearance and/or the maintenance of their physical body?

- There’s a spiritual contrast, though, in these verses (vs. 16) – the longer we live as a believer, the more our “inner man” is being renewed, or being “changed to a previous and preferable state”.

Theologically, every sinner must be “regenerated” in order to be saved (John 3:3 & Eph. 2:4-7) and every “regenerated” sinner will be “renewed” through the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit (Philippians 2:13) ... do we sit and wait for it to happen?

If not, what part does marriage play in this renewal?

What are some of the unique ways marriage renews a man or woman’s “inner man”?

- We are married to “jars of clay” that will lose their shape, their “paint”, and their durability, but the “inner man” of our spouse can be renewed through proper care.

3. In God’s mysterious plan, death usually visits one spouse and grief the other!

- 1 Cor. 4:17 gives grieving spouses hope in their loss – the pain is real but it need not be consuming.
- The word “momentary” qualifies the word “light” (easy to bear, without much substance), and both give the idea of “earthiness” when compared to eternity (where we are headed).
- God invites every spouse to see grief as the catalyst for further spiritual maturity – it is “working” to produce in us (preparing us for) a greater spiritual glory.

Grief usually accompanies the loss of something valuable (assets, abilities, admiration) – what qualifies some grief as being “excessive” or “destructive”?

“There is hope for the future. There is service in the present. Most importantly, there is the cross, both in the past and ever-present.” (Quote from Jere, pg. 179)

- The grief of loss must be kept in perspective – it is not meant by God to destroy us (1 Cor. 10:13), but is one tool God uses to show His incomparable nature.

What are some practical ways we might keep our eyes on the Lord during times of grief?

4. The marriage God has given us is an imperfect picture of what we look forward to enjoying in heaven – may we make our temporary relationship one that imitates the perfect and deeply profound relationship we have with Christ!