

Sunday - June 28, 2009
Pastor - Rev. Paula P. Werner
Sermon - **Love and Marriage**

Read 1 Colossians 3:12

Several years ago I read this passage at a wedding -- perfect words for marriage. Young brides and their moms and their friends do get rather caught up in the wedding dress, the bridesmaid's dresses and the flowers --- yet the wearing apparel for a wedding is only with us for a few hours. This scripture gives us counsel on how to "clothe ourselves" in the characteristics which will assure a lifetime of good relationship. The apostle Paul is writing to the Christians at the town of Colossae in Turkey. In this passage Paul describes how Christians ought to treat one another ---not writing particularly to husbands and wives, but it certainly is applicable. In the Bible, marriage is a sacred calling in which God entrusts one person's soul, body, and needs to another's care. We are called to be a gift from God to our mates, and we are called to minister to them.

This is not easy. In fact, living out a good, strong marriage, a loving marriage, over a lifetime will summon all our creativity, and faithfulness, loyalty, and dedication. Having a lasting marriage is almost counter-cultural. We must invite God to help in this. Everyday life is hectic, demanding, often harsh and unforgiving, our marriage relationship needs to be one of patience, compassion, kindness, gentleness and forgiving. To accomplish this, we must be connected to Christ with the Holy Spirit working in us.

We are told in the letter of 1 John 4:7 this information about love. Listen now: "Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us." We must be connected to Christ so that the Holy Spirit can work within us and God's love may abound.

I'm not glossing over everyday life. For after the wedding festivities, after the honeymoon, the relationship of marriage has its mundane routine of everyday life --- laundry, fixing meals, paying bills -- hoping you'll have enough to pay the bills, household upkeep and car upkeep, finishing education, getting used to a new job, getting used to new relatives. When a baby arrives, everything changes. Everything changes. Your focus is no longer just on each other or self. There's someone else who demands 24/7 attention.... A whole new relational dynamic must be worked out. And this happens with each new child in the family. To accomplish this, careers are put on hold by some, sharing of tasks around the house by both working spouses is begun; illnesses and time off work, children's activities and going to back to school events, all this is new and added on to that in-love couple relationship. Often, with all the focus on the doing of marriage and family life, with the demands of households, careers and children,

you wake up one morning and realize that, as a couple, you and your spouse have been drifting apart. You might even wonder if you still love one another.

Thoughts creep in --- should we stay married as we drift apart and just live separate, parallel lives, or should we divorce even if we are not outwardly fighting, or can we rekindle the flame in the relationship and build a strong marriage?

How to stay married -- how to remain in love? There are lots of books out there which address this, and there are many couples' weekends and encounter groups; there are "how to's" and lists of what to do to have and keep a successful marriage—some excellent, some not so great.

Thanks to Rosemary Balgavy, Sonny Bray and J.J. Reicahrd, we have a video interview of two St. Matthias couples who offer us insight about their own marriages. Janet and Ray Smith, married 53 years, and Greg and Susan Sprow, married 15 years, share words about their commitment that has formed and made their marriages lasting.

SHOW VIDEO

Thank you to these two couples for being willing to share their marriage and life thoughts with us. I heard them state a few key principles that they live by:

make your faith life a key area of your marriage.

Work on developing that. It will look different couple to couple, but faith – and the practice of that faith through the church and through prayer, Bible study, and service activities together will build and keep strong your marriage and family life.

Laughter and humor – light-heartedness are

important in a marriage. We all have pet peeves about our spouse and get irritated with the little, day-to-day habits. But didn't you laugh as Ray and Janet talked about her not closing drawers and doors and him monopolizing the (remote)?? Because it is amusing --- if we can just laugh at our partner's idiosyncrasies, life will be a bit easier. Greg and Susan recount the day's activities lying in bed at night, and find something to smile and laugh about. Important traits.

3) **nurture your fondness and admiration for your mate** – Ray expressed his admiration for the way Janet listens to and ministers to a wide circle of friends in their need. Susan expressed her admiration for Greg – she said he carried the weight on his shoulders for job, home and caring for the girls while Susan went to school for 6 years. Each couple exemplified their admiration, respect and love for the spouse --- they were not absorbed in themselves. Each spouse took the focus off of self and focused on the mate.

4) **Decision making is a togetherness activity.** Susan and Greg spoke directly to this. It's clear that they have even decided to ignore the disagreements on the little stuff, because it's the important things – the values and principles of life that they agree on which matter. Decision making regarding how to parent is one big area that a married couple need to agree on.

Thank you Ray and Janet and Greg and Susan for reminding us of the importance in marriage of laughter, of nurturing your admiration for your spouse,

of making decisions together and of making faith a key component. You've given us strong principles to consider.

In the beginning of a relationship, love is just a feeling, a great feeling. And yet, we all know that feelings come and go. As our hectic lives take over, oftentimes our marriage takes a back seat. We don't FEEL as loving as in the first months—years of marriage. This is when we need to understand that in mature love, our feelings follow our actions. It is in DOING love that we begin to feel love – particularly when the passion has dampened, or the monotony of daily life wears us down. Mature love is DOING love even when you do not FEEL it. When you persistently **do** loving things toward another person, an amazing thing happens: the doing produces the feelings.” (Adam Hamilton quote) A strong, happy, successful marriage requires a decision to love, a commitment to love, to follow Christ in serving this other human being.

May we daily renew our vows, our commitment, to our marriages. As the Bible instructs us, may we daily rise and clothe ourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. May we never fail to forgive..... and may we know love –self-giving, sacrificial love which binds us in harmony.