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# THE ORCHARD

THE ORCHARD EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH | WOMEN'S MINISTRIES | SEPTEMBER 2011

## *A Better Than Hollywood Marriage*

Recently I was asked to speak at a wedding shower for a young lady who has grown up in the church. Whether you have been married for many years, are engaged to be married, or hope to be married one day, these words are intended to remind us all that God's purpose for marriage far exceeds what is often portrayed on a movie screen and in romance novels. I invite you to listen in to my comments for Mandie and Steve....

Paul Tripp wrote a book called *What Did you Expect? Redeeming the Realities of Marriage*. I find this title intriguing because many people have no idea what marriage is really about. Unfortunately, Hollywood has created an unrealistic picture of love, communicating the idea that once we find our Prince Charming, he will forever replace our emptiness and loneliness with an ongoing rush of romance. But most movies either end with the wedding ceremony or pick up after a divorce, beginning the deception of happily ever after all over again!

I believe the reason that half of all marriages fall apart today is because so many men and women enter into it expecting their spouse to fill needs and desires that only Christ can fill. When their groom fails to become as wealthy and influential as Mr. Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice*, women can begin to feel discontent and stop showing the respect he so needs. When the man of their dreams is not *Sleepless in Seattle*, but instead snores at night and makes other unpleasant noises during the day, hearts throbbing over the Empire State Building slowly grow faint. So, for the next few minutes I'd like to share a more realistic picture of what you *can* expect as you take your vows, and how coming to terms with that will help you work toward a marriage that is actually *better than Hollywood ever imagined*.

A biblical vision for marriage begins with understanding that, according to God's magnificent design and purpose, marriage is not mainly about falling in love and living happily ever after, but rather, exists for God's

glory. As John Piper says, "*Marriage is patterned after Christ's covenant relationship to his redeemed people, the church. And therefore, the highest meaning and the most ultimate purpose of marriage is to put the covenant relationship of Christ and His church on display.*" So, let's look at three realities that are important to both know and remember to get you started in the right direction after the honeymoon!

**Reality #1: You are a sinner.** While this is not anything you don't already know; it's important to remember day by day. It's also helpful to learn how sin marred God's design for us as women. We were created to be helpmates to our husbands yet, as a result of the fall, our *natural inclination* is to take charge, take the lead, and be in control. When we believe we are right about something, our temptation is to use every weapon in our female arsenal to prove we are right. This is sin that will rise up in your flesh, Mandie, but praise God, because He has redeemed you, you won't have to give into those impulses.

It has really helped me in my own marriage to stare at the fundamental reality of my own sinfulness because it makes me quicker to inspect my own heart before pronouncing my husband guilty of not caring or loving me simply because he failed to meet my expectations. It has also helped me to understand that God, in His wisdom, created men and women equal in worth, but very different in design! So I encourage you to become a student of your husband as the *man God uniquely created him to be*. Steve will think differently, act differently, and do things differently than you, simply because he is a man. Be careful you don't automatically draw the assumption he is wrong just because he doesn't respond or do things the way you would. The more you understand the unique way God created each of you, the more you will appreciate how your different designs are meant to complement one another, rather than serve as fuel for marital conflict.

**Reality #2: You are also marrying a sinner:** Men were created to lead, provide and protect. Because of the fall, sin has distorted their image of God as well. Rather than taking the initiative and loving their wives as Christ loves the church, men are prone to sin by being passive, abusing their authority, or failing to be servant leaders in their home. Because it doesn't come naturally for men to be the leaders God called them to be, and it *does* come naturally for women to control, wives can subtly usurp their husband's leadership. Often men will step aside but then eventually grow resentful. Mary Kassian, author of *Girls Gone Wise* explains "There are two things men fear: to be ruled over by a woman and to be found inadequate." As women, we can so easily be guilty of both of these things.

Your husband *will* let you down at times. He will battle selfishness just like you will. He will no doubt say and do things that will make you feel unloved. Abraham's wife Sarah learned the secret to having a gentle and quiet spirit in the midst of these disappointments. "For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God, made themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear" (1 Peter 3:5-6).

Sarah was free to submit to her husband because her hope was entirely in God. She was able to respond rightly to Abraham because she feared God above all else. Her submission was a gift to her husband which flowed out of her trust in her heavenly Father in whom she lived and moved and had her being. Because her identity was in Christ she didn't have to prove herself. Her obedience flowed out of her love for her Lord. Likewise, as you place your hope in God, you will become the wife God has called you to be. Even when your husband disappoints you, you will not need to give way to fear if you are rooted in the goodness and sovereignty of God.

**Reality #3:** Through Christ, you are equipped and empowered to be the godly helpmate God created you to be. Sinned marred us but, praise God, Christ has redeemed us! The reason that *true love* in the movies falls flat is because it is built on the shifting sand of *self*. The truth is that God wants to give you and Steve a *better than Hollywood* marriage, one that is built on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Through Christ, you have power to put *self to death*, overcoming your sinful desires to rule and control. Your words and actions can breathe life into your husband, helping Steve become the man God created him to be.

The Gospel reminds us what Christ has done for us, giving us mercy and grace we did not deserve. The more each of you grow to understand and remind yourselves of this, the more inclined you will be to bend that grace to-

ward one another. Through Christ you will be empowered to graciously give forgiveness when you have been wronged and to bear with one another during times of struggle.

Mandie, always remember that only Jesus Christ can satisfy your deepest needs and longings, filling you with immeasurable joy. Only out of the overflow of Christ's love will you be enabled to extend unconditional love to Steve. As you submit to the authority of God's Word, He will provide grace to show respect to your sometimes undeserving husband in his work, your home, and in the bedroom.

Hollywood often leaves us with, "And they lived happily ever after." But God wants us to look beyond happiness to holiness. He tells us to set our minds on things above, not on earthly things. Marriage is not about *us*. It's not primarily about *our* faithfulness to each other (which often fails), *our* love (which is often conditional) or *our* pleasure (which is often self-driven). Rather, it is about God. Marriage is a glorious picture of what God does when two sinners who are committed to Him say, "I do." In the power of the Gospel, we showcase His mercy and grace when we offer grace to undeserving spouses. We display His faithfulness when we are faithful to one another; we point to His love when, though different in design and roles, we unite to bring glory to Jesus Christ.

I'd like to close with a powerful quote and challenge from *Momentary Marriage*, by John Piper: "Marriage is a momentary gift. If we set our face to make of marriage mainly what God designed it to be, no sorrows and no calamities can stand in our way. Every one of them will be, not an obstacle to success, but a way to succeed. The beauty of the covenant-keeping love between Christ and his church shines brightest when nothing but Christ can sustain it.

Very soon the shadow will give way to Reality. The partial will pass into the Perfect. The foretaste will lead to the Banquet. The troubled path will end in Paradise. A hundred candle-lit evenings will come to their consummation in the marriage supper of the Lamb. And this momentary marriage will be swallowed up by Life. Christ will be all and in all. And the purpose of marriage will be complete.

To that end, may God give you both eyes to see what matters most in this life. May the Holy Spirit, whom He sends, make His crucified and risen Son the supreme Treasure of your lives. And may that Treasure so satisfy your souls that the root of every marriage-destroying impulse is severed. And may the marriage-watching world be captivated by the covenant-keeping love of Christ" as it is demonstrated in your marriage.

Thanks for letting me share these thoughts with you,

*Linda Green* Director of Women's Ministries  
- Arlington Heights Campus



# *Making It Personal*

1. Read Ephesians 5: 22-33. Next, take a few minutes to write down as simply as possible, what is the Gospel. Reflect on these Scriptures and the gospel truths to remind yourself of the ultimate purpose of marriage.

2. If you are married, think about an ordinary experience from your marriage this week---a change in plans, a conflict, or an unexpected surprise. How did you handle that experience (in words and action)? What did your response in that situation reveal about your view of God?

3. Why is a robust view of sin helpful to marriage?

4. How does the Gospel give you hope in your upcoming or existing marriage? Write down one or two areas where you most struggle to trust God in some area of your marriage. What promises does God make in Scripture that you can meditate on to grow in bringing the Gospel to bear in your marriage in these areas?

5. As you consider your present understanding and expectations of what marriage should look like, in what ways has your view been shaped by the culture and how does God's Word correct your crooked thinking?

## ...Upcoming Study @ the Itasca Campus...

LIFE Groups, comprised of Bible study, prayer and fellowship, are an integral part of "Roots, Life and Fruit" at The Orchard. The following testimony from Carol, involved in the summer women's Bible study, attests to the spiritual benefits.

"I came to the Orchard last fall searching to know the Lord, to fellowship with believers and to find a new home church. For me "Life in Christ Discipleship" was like riding a spiritual elevator. Every week the Lord took me up to visit another floor. I finished the study with a changed heart and a new knowledge of Christ and his desires for my life. I thought the women's summer study "For Such a Time as This" would be a nice easy way to meet others at our sister campus. I came away with the knowledge of how to be a biblical, godly woman in today's world. Both studies have positively affected my marriage, my home life, relationships with my children, friends and even my workplace. I cannot wait to see what God has in store for us in the upcoming study "Seeking Him; Experiencing the Joy of Personal Revival." I know He will not leave me unchanged."

Transformed, renewed lives happen as we are in His Word, in prayer, and in fellowship with each other. Please consider joining the women of Itasca for a study of "Seeking Him" on **Wednesday evenings**, beginning September 7, from 6:30-8:30. A cost of \$15 covers materials. [Please register online.](#)

## ...Happenings @ the Barrington Campus...

**Life in Christ Discipleship** - under the leadership of Suzy Mazur will focus on what it means to live a fruitful life for the glory of God in every aspect of our lives...marriage, parenting, singleness, work, community and church. Women of all ages welcome.

[Register online.](#)

**Tuesdays 9:10-11:10 AM** - Barrington Campus

**Coffee Talks:** Would you like an opportunity to come in and just chat about things on your heart or finding your place in the church? Whether you are brand new to The Orchard or actively involved in ministry, you're invited to come and spend an hour with Laura Kleinschmidt. Call or email Laura at 847.852.2212, [kleinschmidt@theorchardefc.org](mailto:kleinschmidt@theorchardefc.org).

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- ◇ Copies of this newsletter can be found at the ministry desks at the Arlington Heights, Barrington and Itasca Campuses.
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