

My Vision of Marriage

7-7-11

Lifelong commitments can be better than engaged couples want to believe. The dating, caring, and affection of premarital enjoyment doesn't have to be lost forever in failed expectations and disillusionment.

3:12 p.m.

Marriage is worth the risk in a world where divorce claims one out of two marriages. Yet to reclaim the vision of what a marital relationship can be, we need to take a look at our expectations, our motives, and our faith in God Himself. 50% of all young adults today grew up in homes that went through the sad, bitter, sometimes violent process of a marriage breakup. They saw what it did to Mom & Dad and they don't want it to happen to them. But marriages don't have to turn out that way. In spite of divorce, statistics, marriage still offers a "made in heaven" opportunity to discover the real meaning and richness of love. True, it will take a lot of work but so does everything worthwhile. True, we'll have to make sacrifices but what we receive in personal dividends from a healthy relationship outweigh the losses. True current odds may be against it but if we follow a few basic principles, the odds change dramatically in our favor. True, it's a big responsibility, especially when children come along but with that responsibility comes the authority and help of God to turn that responsibility into satisfying results. True there are other ways to satisfy the pangs of loneliness and feelings of discontent. Our generation is infatuated with "love triangles", "office affairs", and the illusion of "safe sex". But who on his deathbed will say he's glad he had the chance to enjoy sexual intimacy outside of marriage? True, it may seem that the best way or idea is to get out of a bad marriage before the bitterness and anger destroys you but many hurting people have already discovered that as terrible as a loveless

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marriage is, an anger filled divorce can't put it all behind you. We need to see the possibilities of people who will put as much into marriage as they did into their dating relationship. We need to see husbands and wives filled with gratitude for being treasured in spite of all their flaws and imperfections. We need to see the possibilities of two mature people who love each other deeply, not because of what they don't know, but because they have learned the meaning of a love and a forgiveness that endures. We need to see a vision of our marriages not as they are, but as they could be. We need a vision of husbands who, in spite of children and tight finances, will find ways to date their wives as they did before marriage. We need a vision of people touching and talking and embracing until parted only by death itself. Those who value God above all else, marriage provides a testing ground of faith - a laboratory of the heart that has promise not only for this life but for the life to come. People change, situations differ, and dreams are shattered. But the same God who made marriage made it to endure the disappointments and predicable seasons of life that mark all good relationships. This is my vision, so what's yours?



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Gentleness & Quietness

7-5-11

Let me make gentleness and mental quietness my standard, my protection, and my goal. Let me not chew on the ego's meatless bones: what someone meant by something they said. How hopelessly incompetent I am. How unfair life is. How misunderstood I am by my family. How impossible spiritual attainment is. Let me instead practice the Answer, which is stillness of mind, connection with others, and trust in God.

10:30 a.m.

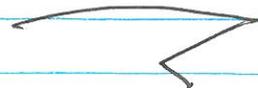
Release Your Mind

7-5-11

Because its nature is to soar in freedom and enter the place of peace effortlessly, today I will picture my mind as a beautiful and buoyant balloon, and I will release it to the divine. Now it is chained to a world that is old and tired, where we have grown weary of fractured lives and relationships, of pointless triumphs and short-lived accomplishments, of eventual loss and inevitable endings. Today it is within my power to release my mind and let it soar above separation and pain. Each time I practice this, my self-imposed chains become weaker and my happiness more certain.

11:00 a.m.

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Trapped In the Past

7-5-11

We all make mistakes, but God does not disqualify us simply because we have failed. He's the God of another chance. You may have missed plan A for your life, but God has a plan B, a plan C, a plan D, and a plan E. God will always find a way to get you to your final destination if you will trust Him.

The Old Testament records how King David ordered a man murdered so he could marry his wife. But when David repented, God forgave him and still used him in a great way.

A man named Saul hated Christians; he chased them down, persecuted them, and had them thrown in jail. Yet God forgave him, changed his name to Paul, and he ended up writing more than half the New Testament.

Rahab was a prostitute, yet God used her to help deliver the children of Israel. Nobody is too far gone, no matter what they've done. You need to know that God still loves you. He has a great plan for your life; He has not run out of mercy. If you have asked God for His forgiveness, God has already forgiven you. The question is: Will you forgive yourself? Will you quit living in guilt and condemnation? Will you let the past be the past and live today in an attitude of faith and victory? Always remember, God can make beauty out of your ashes!

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Words of Encouragement

7-6-11

3:01 p.m.

- * Do all the good you can, in all the ways you can, for all the people you can, while you can!
- * If life hands you lemons, make lemonade!
- * There's no such thing as harmless, even a beautiful rose has thorns!
- * A wise man will change, but a fool will stay the same!
- * At some level, aren't we all statistics?
- * Confession is good for the soul, if you have one you'll understand!
- * Your life right now is a reflection of your past thoughts!
- * Life is not a game, but a war to be waged, and ^{that} war is not physical but spiritual in a matter of eternal life or death!
- * Words are powerful: they can either build up or destroy!

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