

"LIFTING MARRIAGE ABOVE THE ORDINARY"

In more recent years, the trend in the Protestant Church has been to enlarge upon the celebration of Mother's Day, and to observe this second Sunday in the month of May as the "Festival of the Christian Home". And so today, in many of the churches across our land, particular emphasis is being placed upon the home and the family. It is altogether fitting for us to consider the marriage relationship, for certainly it is basic to a strong and meaningful home life. It is basic to the future of our country and the world.

A New York City physician once asked one hundred married men and one hundred married women the following question: IF BY SOME MIRACLE YOU COULD PRESS A BUTTON AND FIND THAT YOU HAD NEVER BEEN MARRIED TO YOUR HUSBAND OR YOUR WIFE, WOULD YOU PRESS THE BUTTON? You'll be interested to know that one hundred and thirty said "NO".....they wouldn't press the button. Sixteen said "NO" with certain qualifications, and only twenty-eight said "YES". It's good to know that there are many couples living together who have not regretted the adventure of marriage to the point of wanting to wipe out the entire experience.

The trouble is, however, that there is no magic button conveniently handy when the strains and the tensions of marriage appear. Where divorce is considered undesirable, this often means then that a state of armed truce exists. It's not the actual breakup of marriage that is the most important problem facing married couples today, but rather it is that of getting marriage off dead-level, and lifting it up to the happy and exciting reality of their dreams. Few couples want divorce. Most couples do not expect Utopia. But all couples have the right to find in marriage a rich and a satisfying program of living.

Jesus was always concerned with the highest interests of men and women. He wanted them to make marriage a blessed and a permanent relationship. The purpose of this sermon is to examine some of the factors that help to lift marriage above the ordinary and make it a creative and happy experience. It can be done if both parties are willing to work at the job.....

FIRST: I would have you consider that the ideal of marriage must be high, and yet it must be realistic, and above all it must be mutually agreed upon.

Dr. Randolph Ray, the rector of the "Little Church Around the Corner" here in New York once said that "The cure of easy divorce is hard marriage". Dr. Ray backs up this idea by refusing to marry more couples than he marries. Many times in the course of conversation with the prospective bride and groom, he finds that one of them will say that if the marriage doesn't prove to be successful, they can always get a divorce. When such a view is expressed before the ceremony, it puts the marriage under a handicap which is impossible to overcome. Divorce comes easily when marriage is regarded lightly. Like the Lansing, Michigan, man wed only four weeks, who asked for a divorce on the grounds that his eye glasses were out of focus when he married. TIME magazine told of a woman in New Jersey who was given a divorce after testifying that her husband forced her to eat her breakfast on the kitchen floor which he had made her scrub with a fingernail brush.

We smile at these rather extreme cases, but the idea I'm trying to bring out is this - that permanence in marriage is often predetermined by the attitude of both parties toward marriage itself. If one of them regards marriage as a matter of convenience, or as a means of getting ahead in the world, or as a means of licensed sexual gratification, or as a way out of a problem situation, then such a marriage is doomed before it starts. Likewise, marriage is no magical route to happiness for two people of widely differing educational backgrounds, cultural interests, or religious training.

A psychologist by the name of Louis Terman connected with Stanford University has made a very important study of marriage. He points out the four most important influences that determine a happy marriage. They are:

1. Having parents who are happily married, and who set their children a good example of how a happy marriage works.
2. Having a mature character and an effective personality. All the habits contributing to character and personality contribute all to a happy marriage.
3. Being religious and being married under the auspices of a church.
4. Being eager to have children, or to adopt children.

The point is this - that marriage is serious business. It can affect human life for good or bad more than any other personal program. Yet most people enter into it with little or no preparation. We prepare our young people for careers of all kinds. And yet we trust to luck in the most important career of all.....the career of wife and husband.

"A hundred years ago today a wilderness
was here.
A man with powder in his gun went forth
to hunt a deer.
But now the times have changed along a
different plan;
A dear with powder on her nose goes forth
to hunt a man."

With the desire to "catch a man" or "find a woman" the dominating and controlling factor in so many lives, it's little wonder that so many marriages turn out unhappily. Marriages that are built upon common loyalties, loyalty to the same values, loyalty to the same church, loyalty to the same circle of friends, and above all, a steadfast loyalty to each other.....such marriages are blessed, and can be expected to be full of happiness!

SECOND: I would have you consider that the practical problems of marriage can be solved with good humor and common sense on both sides.

A spirit of good humored give and take is necessary for a happy marriage. Trouble comes when one party takes everything and never wants to give. Marriage is not a 50 - 50 proposition. It's a 90 - 90 proposition. Each one has to go more than half way.

Sometime ago I read in the newspaper about a man living in Detroit who choked his wife to death with a towel. They had been childhood sweethearts, and had been married 29 years. What would cause a man to do this. I was quite interested in reading some of the things he said to the judge. "She was a jewel when I married her". "But then she got lazy. She wore a hole in the living room rug sitting in one place working jigsaw puzzles while my socks went unmended". In the meantime his wife had been working in an office and had taken in two roomers to augment his small income. That couple, like many couples, had their problems. How much better it would have been for the wife to mend the socks rather than be choked to death. And how much better it would have been for the husband to wear socks with holes in them than to be tried for murder.

The point is this - that most of the practical problems of marriage can be solved if both parties want to solve them. In fact, the problems themselves can help build a stronger marriage if they're attacked with common sense and a sense of humor. Someone has listed nine rules on how to make quarrels improve your marriage:

1. Realize that some conflict between married people is inevitable.
2. Don't try to reform your mater..
3. Don't bury your griefances.
4. Stick to the issues while quarreling. Don't go off on tangents of personal abuse.
5. Don't worry about whose right or wrong. Be quick to apologize, even though you are right.
6. Grant your mate the right to be difficult once in a while.
7. Be patient, but not longer suffering.
8. Try to end the quarrel on a positive note.
9. If quarrels become chronic, don't wait until your marriage is ruined. Consult some expert outsider.

In other words, if there are serious points at issue, such as relatives or finances, attack them, settle them, and forget them. It is the running, long term, never ending nagging and complaining and criticizing and whining that casts a dark cloud over marriage. Come to term with the big problems, and overlook the little ones. And remember that common sense plus a sense of good humor will go a long way toward smoothing out the bumps in the road.

THIRD: I would suggest that the little niceties of good human relations never be forgotten.

There's a tribe in Africa that has a rather odd wedding custom. The wedding ceremony takes all day. Sometime during the day, the bride will rise up in fury at the man she is marrying. It's part of the ceremony. She calls the man every vile word that she can think of. She tears him right down.....he's the ugliest man she's ever seen.....he's mean and selfish.....lazy and good for nothing. She wonders why any girl would ever marry such a lump of stupidity. This outburst is all in order. It's the custom of the tribe. After the marriage, the wife is not supposed to talk back or act mean to her husband. She's given a chance to get it all out of her system before the marriage begins.

This practice may seem a bit uncivilized. But the principle is civilized. Too often we put on our best manners before marriage and our worst manners after the ceremony is over. This is enough to make any marriage unworkable. Marriage deserves our gentlest spirits, our kindest words, and our finest personal relationships. It thrives on small attentions, signs of appreciation and frequent compliments. Politeness, courtesy, and understanding on both sides will do more for a marriage than a big income, or a fine house. The spirit of mature understanding and forgiveness will last far longer than social glamour and sexual thrills. Our marriages are in our own hands. We can make them or break them by the kind of people we choose to be.

"We flatter those we scarcely know.
We please the fleeting guest.
And deal full many a thoughtless blow
To those we love the best."

FOURTH: And finally I would suggest that the atmosphere of married life must be undergirded and supported by a strong and a meaningful religious faith.

A minister living in Rochester, New York once sent out a questionnaire to over 750 couples whom he had united in marriage. There was one question he asked them that was phrased in the following way: "WHAT, IN YOUR JUDGMENT, IS THE GREATEST ELEMENT MAKING FOR HAPPINESS IN HOME LIFE?" It's an interesting question for us to think over. You'll be surprised to know the great number replied in these terms: "RELIGION LIVED DAILY IN THE HOME!"

It would appear then that the closer we come to finding God in our own personal lives, the closer we will come to finding happiness in our marriage relationships. For if a marriage is to last, its loyalties must be based on something more than mere physical, material, and social arrangements. It works best and it gives the highest satisfactions when it is based on the laws of God, and conducted in the spirit of the Master. Nothing binds hearts closer together than a deep and real faith in God. It has been said that couples that pray together, stay together. There's great truth in this. A common loyalty to God makes the loyalties of marriage sacred and secure.

Roy Burkhardt of Columbus, Ohio, tells in one of his books of noticing at the close of a marriage service which he performed, an elderly couple sitting in the back row of the church kissing each other with rather obvious affection. He made a point of meeting them afterward. He learned that they were celebrating their 52nd anniversary and were rejoicing in 52 years of married happiness. Roy Burkhardt goes on to say that he was impressed with a remark made by the woman: She said to him, looking at her husband:

"I trust him, and God alike....."

It's that kind of trust that anchors down a marriage. The two go together. We come to trust each other when we learn together to trust God.

Marriage is not only a contract, it's a spiritual relationship. When a husband and a wife share a meaningful religious faith, and test their decisions and their plans by the teachings of Jesus, their marriage has deep and strong roots. When they bring the church into

their program of living, and engage in prayer and devotions together, they are building their marriage on sure foundations. When God is left out of a marriage contract, something very fundamental to human happiness and well being has been omitted.

*For in the words of
the closing
hymn —*

"Happy the home when God is there,
And love fills every breast;
When one their wish, and one their prayer,
And one their heavenly rest.

Happy the home where prayer is heard,
And praise is wont to rise;
Where parents love the sacred word
And all its wisdom prize.

Lord, let us in our homes agree
This blessed peace to gain;
Unite our hearts in love to Thee,
And love to all will reign.

LET US PRAY:

Our Heavenly Father, grant that what we have heard with our ears, we may believe in our hearts. And what we believe in our hearts, we may practice in our lives. Help each one of us to grow in our understanding of what it means to be a true Christian. In thy name, we pray. Amen.

outline: "LIFTING MARRIAGE ABOVE THE ORDINARY"

I. Introduction.

- A. Opening....."In more recent years, the trend....
- B. A New York City physician: "If by some miracle, you could press a button....."
- C. The trouble is, however, that there is no magic button...
- D. Jesus was always concerned.....He wanted them....The PURPOSE.....

II. Ideal of marriage must be high, realistic, and mutually agreed upon.

- A. Dr. Randolph Ray "cure for easy divorce is hard marriage" Refuses....Divorce comes easily when marriage is regarded lightly. Like Lansing, Michigan man.....Woman from NJ.
- B. Permanence in marriage.....
- C. Psychologist...Louis Terman 4 influence;
 - 1. Parents happily married.
 - 2. Mature character, effective personality.
 - 3. Being religious
 - 4. Children.
- D. Marriage is serious business. It can affect...
- E. A hundred years ago today a wilderness was here....
- F. With desire to catch a man.....

III. The practical problems of marriage can be solved with good humor and common sense on both sides.

- A. A spirit of good humored...."Trouble comes.....50-50, 90 90.
- B. Sometime ago I read in the newspaper about a man living.... "She was a jewel when I married her...."
- ✓ C. The point is this - that most of the practical problems.... (Nine rules)
- D. In other words.....if there are serious issues at stake.

IV. Little niceties of good human relations never be forgotten.

- A. Tribe in Africa that has a rather odd wedding custom.
- B. Practice may seem a bit uncivilized.....
 - We flatter those we scarcely know.
 - We please the.....
 - And deal full many
 - To those.....

V. Atmosphere of married life must be undergirded and supported by a strong and meaningful religious faith.

- A. A minister living in Rochester...."WHAT in your judgment, is the greatest element making for happiness in home life." "Religion lived daily in the home"
- B. It would appear then.....For if marriage is to last... It works best....
- C. Roy Burkhardt....."I trust him and God alike"
- D. Marriage is not only a contract, it's a spirit relationship. When a husband and wife SHARE....TEST When they INCLUDE, ENGAGE... When God is left out....

Closing poem...

Happy the home when God is there.

Suggest
(to be done)

NINE RULES

1. Realize that some conflict between - inevitable.
2. Don't try to reform your mate.
3. Don't bury your grievances.
4. Stick to issues.....Don't go off on tangents.
5. Don't worry about whose right or wrong.
6. Grant mate right to be difficult.
7. Be patient; but not long suffering.
8. End quarrels on positive note.
9. If qu. chronic, consult outsider.

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A New York physician asked one hundred married men and one hundred married women the following question: "IF BY SOME MIRACLE YOU COULD PRESS A BUTTON AND FIND THAT YOU HAD NEVER BEEN MARRIED TO YOUR HUSBAND OR WIFE, WOULD YOU PRESS THE BUTTON?" One hundred and thirty out of the two hundred said, "NO". Sixteen said, "NO" with qualifications. And only twenty-eight said, "YES". These results are encouraging. It's good to know that there are many couples living together who have not regretted the adventure of marriage to the point of wanting to wipe out the experience.

Today marks the beginning of NATIONAL FAMILY WEEK. This week, in churches and communities across our land, particular emphasis will be placed on the home. It is important for us to seriously consider marriage....the family and the home....

AN IMPORTANT PROBLEM facing married couples today is that of getting marriage off DEAD LEVEL and LIFTING it up to the happy and exciting reality of their dreams. All couples have the right to

find in marriage a rich and satisfying program of living. Jesus was always concerned with the highest interests of men and women. He wanted them to make marriage a blessed and enduring relationship. THE PURPOSE OF THIS SERMON is to examine some of the factors that LIFT MARRIAGE ABOVE THE ORDINARY and make it a blessed institution. I would like to suggest four thoughts for your consideration.

THE IDEAL OF MARRIAGE MUST
BE HIGH. REALISTIC. AND
MUTUALLY AGREED UPON.

Dr. Randolph
Ray, the rector
of the famous,

"Little Church Around the Corner" in New York City, once said that, "The cure for easy divorce is hard marriage." Dr. Ray refuses to marry more couples than he marries. Many times in the course of conversation with the prospective bride and groom he finds that one of them will say that if the marriage doesn't prove to be successful, they can always get a divorce. According to Dr. Ray this puts a marriage under a handicap which is hard to overcome.

DIVORCE COMES EASILY WHEN MARRIAGE IS REGARDED LIGHTLY. Like the Lansing, Michigan, man, wed only four weeks, who asked for a divorce on the grounds that his eye glasses were out of focus when he married. Or like the Hackensack, New Jersey woman who was given a divorce after testifying that her husband forced her to eat her breakfast on the kitchen floor which he had made her scrub with a fingernail brush.

IN ORTHER WORDS, PERMANENCE in marriage is often predetermined by the attitude of both parties toward marriage itself. If one of them regards marriage

as a matter of convenience...

or as a means of getting ahead in the world..

or of licensed sexual gratification...

or as a way out of a problem situation.

then such a marriage is doomed before it starts. Likewise, marriage is no MAGICAL ROUTE for two people of

widely differing educational backgrounds...

cultural interests...

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A study of marriage by psychologist, LEWIS
TERMAN at Stanford University tells of the
four most important influences that determine a
happy marriage:

1. Having parents who are happily married
and who set their children a good ex-
ample of how a happy marriage works.
2. Having a mature character and
effective personality.
3. Being religious and being married
under the auspices of a church.
4. Being eager to have children or to
adopt children.

Marriage is a serious business and can affect
man life for good or ill more than any other
personal program. Yet most people enter in
it with little or no preparation. We
prepare our young people for careers of all
kinds. Yet we trust to luck in the most
important career of all - the career of wife
and husband.

A hundred years ago today a
wilderness was here.
A man with powder in his gun
went forth to hunt a deer.
But now the times have changed
along a different plan;
A dear with powder on her nose
goes forth to hunt a man!

With the desire to "catch a man" or "grab a wife" the controlling factor in so many lives, it is little wonder so many marriages turn out unhappily.

Marriages that are built upon common loyalties.....

loyalty to the same values...

loyalty to the same church...

loyalty to the same circle of friends.

AND ABOVE ALL a steadfast loyalty to each other...

such marriages can be expected to be full of happiness.

II THE PRACTICAL PROBLEMS OF MARRIAGE CAN BE SOLVED WITH GOOD HUMOR AND COMMON SENSE ON BOTH SIDES.

A spirit of good humored give and take is necessary

for a happy marriage. Trouble comes when one party takes everything and never wants to give. Marriage is not a 50-50 proposition, it is a 60-60 proposition. Each one has to go more than half way.

A man in Detroit choked his wife to death with a towel. They had been childhood sweet-

hearts and had been married 29 years. "SHE WAS A JEWEL WHEN I MARRIED HER," he said. "BUT SHE GOT LAZY. SHE WORE A HOLE IN THE LIVINGROOM RUG SITTING IN ONE PLACE TO WORK JIGSAW PUZZLES WHILE MY SOCKS WENT UNMENDED." In the meantime his wife had been working in an office and had taken in two roomers to augment his small income. That couple, like all couples, had their problems. Far better, however, for the wife to mend socks than be choked to death. Far better for the husband to wear socks with holes than to be tried for murder!

THE POINT IS that most of the practical problems of marriage can be solved if both parties want to solve them. In fact, the problems themselves can help build a stronger marriage if they're attacked with common sense and a sense of humor. Someone has listed rules on how to make quarrels improve your marriage:

1. Realize that some conflict between married people is inevitable..
2. Don't try to reform your mater..
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4. Stick to the issues while quarreling.
Don't go off on tangents of personal abuse.

5. Don't worry about who's right or wrong. Be quick to apologize even though you're right.
6. Grant your mate the right to be difficult once in a while.
7. Be patient, but not long suffering.
8. Try to end the quarrel on a positive note. And if quarrels become chronic, don't wait until your marriage is ruined. Consult some expert outsider.

IN OTHER WORDS, if there are serious points at issue, ATTACK them, SETTLE them, and FORGET them. Come to terms with the big problems and overlook the little ones. Common sense plus a sense of good humor will help to smooth out many of the bumps in the road.

III. THE LITTLE NICETIES OF GOOD HUMAN RELATIONS MUST NEVER BE FORGOTTEN. A tribe in Africa has an odd wedding

custom. The wedding ceremony takes all day. Sometime during the day, the bride will rise up in a fury of temper at the men she is marrying.

She screams in great rage and denounces the groom with every vile word she knows.

He's the ugliest man she's seen....

He's mean and selfish.....

He's lazy and good for nothing.

She wonders why any girl would ever marry such a lump of stupidity.

This outburst is all quite in order. It's the custom of the tribe. After the marriage the wife is not supposed to talk back or act mean to her husband. She is given a chance to get it all out of her system before the marriage begins!

This practice may seem a bit uncivilized. But the principle is civilized. Too often we put on our best manners before marriage and our worst manners after the ceremony is over....

Marriage deserves

our gentlest spirit.....

our kindest words....

our finest personal relationships.

Marriages thrive on

small attentions....

generous considerations....

frequent compliments.....

and signs of appreciation....

POLITENESS

COURTESY

AND UNDERSTANDING

on both sides will do more for a marriage than

a big income or a fine house. Plain thoughtfulness and simple tenderness mean more than extravagant promises.

Our marriages are in our own hands. We can make them or break them by the kind of people we choose to be:

We flatter those we scarcely know
We please the fleeting guest
And deal full many a thoughtless blow
To those we love the best!

THE ATMOSPHERE OF MARRIED
LIFE MUST BE UNDERGIRD BY
A VITAL RELIGIOUS FAITH.

If marriage
is to last, its
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must be based on something more than mere physical, material and social arrangements. Marriage is a sacred and spiritual union sanctioned by God. It works best and gives the highest satisfactions when it is based on the laws of God and conducted in the spirit of the Master.

Nothing binds hearts closer together than a deep and real faith in God. Couples that pray together, stay together. Couples that pray together are likely to be able to meet any

issues of life with power and confidence. A Common loyalty to God makes the loyalties of marriage sacred and secure. When God joins together a couple, it is almost impossible for a man to break it asunder.

The English minister Alistair Maclean said that we must think of ourselves as commissioned by God in every role of life.

"I am a God appointed farmer. I am a God-appointed wife. I am a God-appointed worker. I am a God-appointed nurse. THEREFORE I occupy a place of sacred trust, and to it I must offer my loving loyalty - a loyalty as sure as the sun-rising; as constant as the tide, and as glad and generous as a woman's self-giving for her child."

A God-appointed wife! A god*appointed husband! Here is that which gives beauty and adventure to the building of a home. It is this divine undergirding that gives refinement and nobility to married life.

Dr. Randolph Ray, after years and years of advising and marrying couples, gives these five simple thoughts for happiness in marriage:

Be kind.

Remember marriage is a partnership.

Don't lose your temper.

Don't postpone making up after
a quarrel.

Cultivate faith in God and
faith in each other.

Such marriages are both blessed and permanent.

Book
In the FINE ART OF LIVING TOGETHER ~~BY~~ the
late Albert W. Beaven of Rochester said he
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GREATEST ELEMENT MAKING FOR HAPPINESS IN HOME
LIFE?" the largest number said: "RELIGION
LIVED DAILY IN THE HOME."

It would appear then that the closer we
get to Christian love in our living, the
closer will we come to happiness in our home
life.

"Happy the home when God is there,
And love fills every breast;
When one their wish, and one their pray,
And one their heavenly rest.

Happy the home where prayer is heard,
And praise is wont to rise;
Where parents love the sacred word
And all its wisdom prize.

Lord, let us in our homes agree
This blessed peace to gain;
Unite our hearts in love to Thee,
And love to all will reign.