

Daily Devotionals: Dear Church | October 16, 2022

Week 8 | Honoring God While Married

Dear Church,

After a short stint at Purdue University, I began working in a manufacturing plant. It started as a summer job, but eventually became my first career, and although it wasn't on my list of preferred careers, it was a good one.

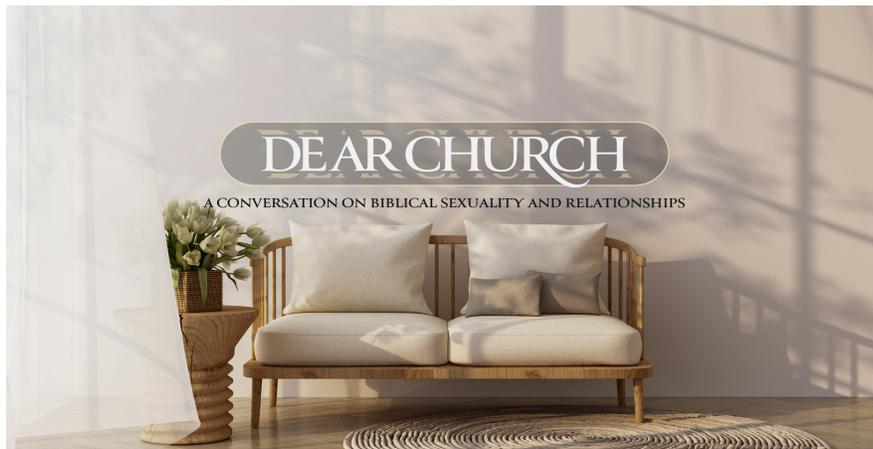
It was while I was at the plant that I began dating my wife. It was a quick courtship, three months to be exact, before we set a date to be married. I fell in love hard and fast... there was no doubt we were both ready to get married. The week before we married, my excitement began to blend with a nervousness; not for marrying Marci, just the reality of marriage being FOREVER (that's a long time)!

I remember my last lunch at the plant before my wedding. I sat there with the same guys I ate with every day: Bill, Bob, Sarge, and a few others. One asked if I was nervous, to which I replied, "very!" After I responded, they all teased me about it and one of them gave me some advice; "Get married on Saturday and if things don't work, just get a divorce." Real advice from a more mature man to a younger man... needless to say, I've never forgotten that lunch!

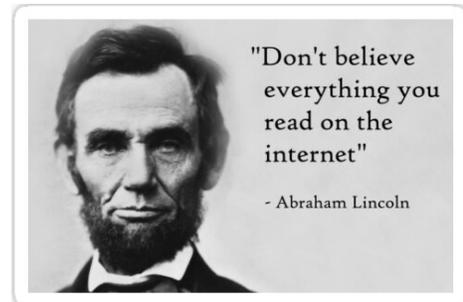
Have you ever received such poor advice?

We are being fed a constant stream of unrealistic advice that slowly seeps into our belief system. With a meal replacement drink, I can have the body of a professional athlete without any of the work. I need a \$60,000 pick-up truck because... well, just because. My Instagram friends have a perfect marriage because they have so much fun at the restaurants they visit, concerts they go to, or vacations they take.

In his book, "Sacred Marriage," author Gary Thomas said, "What if God designed marriage to make us holy more than to make us happy?" And ironically (or maybe not so ironically), nearly all holy people I know are happy!



I wonder if the marriage advice we listen to would be more reliable if we received it from a source more reliable than the internet... or an aunt who has been married three times... or a buddy who hates everyone! I think there are great things on the internet, I love my aunt, and Jerry has been my friend since grade school, but it would serve my marriage better if I listened to more reliable advice.



The Bible is packed with great advice. It's taught me the most important things I can do for my marriage is to love God and love others. And come to think of it... that advice is more about me than it is marriage. Whether married or not, the most important relationship we can have is with Jesus (Matthew 22:34-40).

How is your relationship with Jesus?

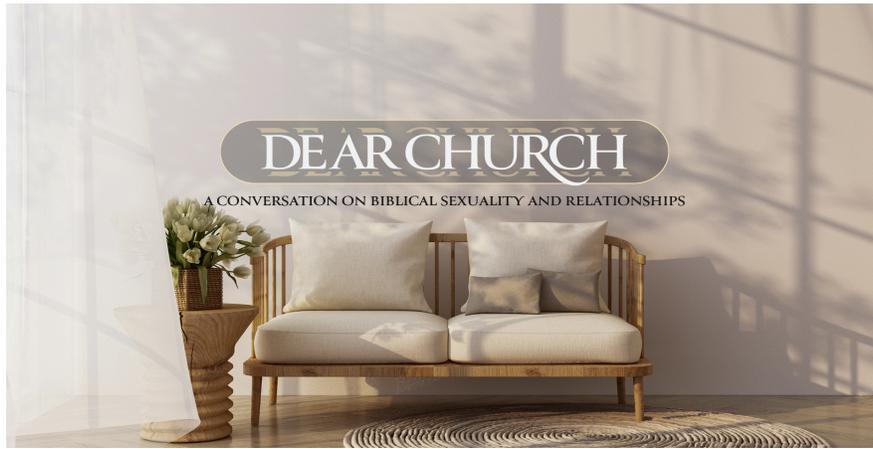
This truth is repeated in Mark, Luke, Deuteronomy; it's a theme all throughout the Bible. The greater investment I make into my relationship with Jesus, the greater husband I can be. It doesn't make me perfect; I remain a broken person. But it helps me enter my relationship with my wife from a place of love, grace, servanthood – the list could go on, but notice that all those attributes start with humility. As my relationship with Jesus is strengthened and I find confidence in Him, it takes pressure off Marci and allows her to focus on her relationship with Him instead of trying to keep me happy.

Have you put pressure on your spouse to make you happy?

Scripture gives us great advice on marriage. To name just a few pieces of advice: living with a one-flesh mentality, submitting to each other, loving your wife like Jesus loves His church, respecting your husband, and so much more are foundational aspects of a Christ-honoring marriage. As we continue to strive and pray for thriving marriages, be on the lookout for additional opportunities to invest in your own relationship as our new marriage ministry gets rolling.

For now, these practices could be an easy place to start.

Pray with your spouse every day – don't overcomplicate this, it just needs to be the two of you holding hands and talking with Jesus.



Connect with others who are seeking a marriage that honors God.

Read your Bible; and if you don't have one, get one... if you don't have the money, reach out to me.

Love your spouse.

Be humble.

What's something you can do this week to love your spouse?

What if marriage is the way Jesus is making you holy? What if your spouse is an imperfect person and they fall short? What if the greatest thing you can give to your spouse is grace? Jesus gave you grace. Can you spare some?

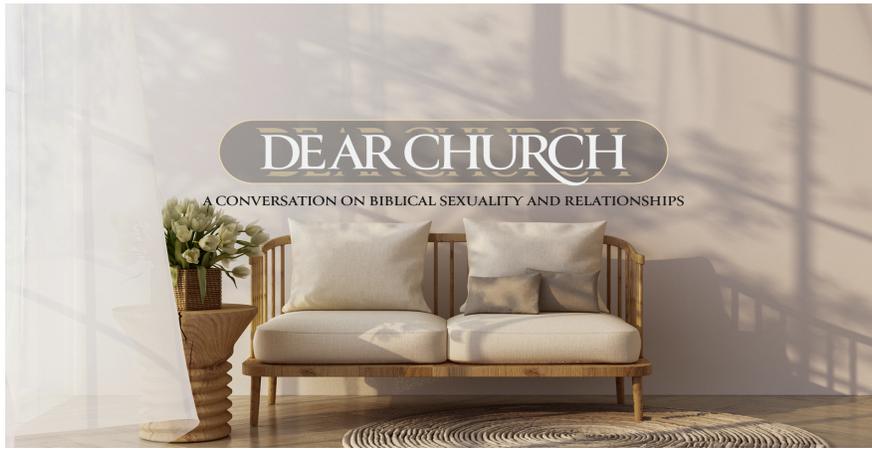
Do you ever fall short in your marriage?

We're never going to get it all right, but we need to keep on striving for nothing short of a thriving, loving, and gracious marriage. Let's strive to have a marriage that makes our spouse a better reflection of Jesus.

If you're looking for ways to enrich your marriage, we'd suggest these resources:

1. We'd recommend the book *The Meaning of Marriage* by Timothy Keller (it's available for purchase on Sundays!) Here's a brief synopsis of the book:

“Modern culture would have you believe that everyone has a soul mate; that romance is the most important part of a successful marriage; that your spouse is there to help you realize your potential; that marriage does not mean forever, but merely for now; and that starting over after a divorce is the best solution to seemingly intractable marriage issues. But these modern-day assumptions are wrong. Timothy Keller, with insights from Kathy, his wife of thirty-seven years, shows marriage to be a glorious relationship that is also misunderstood and mysterious. *The Meaning of Marriage* offers instruction on how to have a successful marriage, and is essential reading for anyone who wants to know God and love more deeply in this life.”



2. Check out this website loveology.org. It's chock-full of resources on marriage.
3. Finally, check out a sermon by Andy Stanley called "How to Have a Better Marriage" on YouTube.

Have a fantastic week!

Eric | Marriage & Family Pastor