

thESource *Bible Study*

I Pledge You My Faithfulness

by *Jim Gimbel*

Getting Started

What do you most look forward to about being an adult?

How many of you expect that at least part of your adult life will be as a married person?

What is Marriage?

What is a simple definition of marriage?

What possible benefits do you envision about being married?

What stresses often accompany marriage?

Almost 95% of adults in the U.S. marry. What do you expect your marriage to be like?

Happily Ever After

(Show ending of Walt Disney's Snow White)

"Prince Charming led Snow White away on his white horse. In his palace high on a hill, they lived happily ever after as King and Queen of the land." (Walt Disney: Snow White and the Seven Dwarves. New York: Longmeadow Press, 1986, p. 96)

"Eric and Ariel were married aboard the wedding ship, with all the merpeople looking on. 'I think they're going to live happily ever after,' said Scuttle. And for once, Scuttle was right." (Walt Disney: The Little Mermaid. New York: Gallery Books, 1989, p. 96)

What might be wrong with these images?

How is real life similar to and different from these stories?

Is living "happily ever after" only a fairy tale?

God Creates

The story of creation continually repeats the refrain, "And God saw that it was good." The only exception is Genesis 2:18, which reads, "The Lord God said, 'It is not good for man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.'" Was God here commanding marriage for everyone, or providing for those who choose to marry?

Read 1 Corinthians 7:1-11.

What are the advantages of marriage? What are the advantages of singleness?

What are the disadvantages of each?

In the context of Genesis 2:18, what does a "helper" do?

What characteristics make someone "suitable"?

Marriage Vows

The marriage vows of our Lutheran Worship Agenda give each person the chance to say, "I, [name], in the presence of God and these witnesses, take you, [name], to be my husband/wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, until death parts us, and I pledge you my faithfulness" (St. Louis: Concordia; 1984, p. 122).

Are these words appropriate?

How would you change them?

How do most people live these vows? Why?

In what ways might love be blind to things in the future?

God's Will for Marriage

Marriage is a covenant, a binding agreement between the couple sharing their vows and between God and the couple.

Jesus said: "Haven't you read, that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate (Matthew 19:4-6).

What is God's will for marriage?

Why is this so important?

How is God involved with selecting a mate and the decision of whom to marry.

Consider these facts:

Five of every ten couples who marry will divorce.

Only two of the five remaining married will indicate that their marriage is a happy one.

The average marriage lasts only 9.4 years.

Many who get divorced and remarry remain unhappy, often divorcing a second or third time.

Why do you think this is so?

What kinds of events may lead to a divorce?

Is divorce an unpardonable sin?

Is it possible to choose a mate for life?

Help for the Hurting

It has been said that in marriage the two become one, and so divorce is more like an amputation of one body than the separation of two. Divorce, like an amputation, always hurts.

What kinds of hurts come from broken relationships?

How does Ephesians 3:14-21 give hope for times when we hurt?

What does Ephesians 2:13-18 say about the restoration of life after a broken relationship?

Success in Marriage

Some recent studies suggest that marriage success may heavily depend on the following relationship areas:

- Good communication skills
- Healthy conflict resolution skills
- Compatible personalities
- A mutual and realistic commitment to the day-to-day “work” of a marriage
- God’s active role in marriage

How can these factors be important in mate selection?

What variables are we able to control?

Risks and Rewards

The risks of a relationship are great. It may be frightening to think of a long-term commitment, of the potential frustration, aches, and pains of being close to someone and vulnerable. Yet the rewards are tremendous. God has blessed us with other people to share life with.

We know that God will bless our efforts and strengthen our relationships as we grow in Him because He promises: “Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and His love is made complete in us... We love because He first loved us” (1 John 4:11-12, 19).

Closing Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, thank You for loving and forgiving us through Jesus Christ. Help us to love one another. Heal us from our hurts, and help us minister to others who are hurting. Give us self-control and contentment in our lives, and prepare us for our future relationships. Create in us the Christian characteristics desirable in a mate, and lead us to discover those in other people. If it is Your will that we marry, please bless us with wisdom in choosing a marriage partner, and the strength to work toward a healthy relationship for a lifetime. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Originally published in Resources for Youth Ministry 91:2.

© 1994 by the Board for Youth Services, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1333 South Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122.

Republished and revised in March 2011 for thESource.

thESource is published on the Web by LCMS District & Congregational Services—Youth Ministry. The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1333 South Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295; 1-800-248-1930; www.youthesource.com. Editor: Sherrah Holobaugh Behrens. VOL. 8 NO. 3. March 2011.