

On my wedding day I remember thinking that if it didn't work out, I would get a divorce. I'm not proud of those thoughts! But we were "in love" and I thought that "love would keep us together." (For those of you that are too young to remember, that's a line from a song from the Captain & Tennille.) But the struggles we've been through over the years needed more than a Hollywood romance to keep it together. There were times when I wanted to give up, and yet we are evidence of what God can do in a relationship. We have now been married over twenty years.

Before I was married, I wish I would have viewed the marriage commitment the way God does. I looked at it as a contract that could be easily dissolved if we were dissatisfied. But God calls marriage a covenant – a binding agreement between husband and wife, united by God. It also represents the perfect union between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is a holy vow and should not be taken lightly.

I wish I would have looked at the roles of husband and wife the way God does. There are over 500 verses in the Bible that talk about marriage. If God wrote that much about it, I think we ought to pay attention! Men and women have different, but equal, roles. It's important to focus on our own responsibilities before worrying about what our spouse is doing wrong.

I wish I would have understood what cleave means. Dan gave the visual picture of an Olympic gymnast on the rings doing the Iron Cross. This pose is performed by extending both arms straight out from the sides of the body while suspended mid air for at least two seconds. Imagine the strength that is needed to grip the rings. That is our picture of cleaving as described in Genesis. In addition to holding tightly together (to cleave), each person should each be cleaving to God through their relationship with Jesus. Those that are single can build this relationship right now.

Knowing these things would not have eliminated all of our problems. Marriage unites two flawed individuals, so there are bound to be difficulties. According to statistics, almost half of marriages (including those that are Christian) end in divorce. So how can Christians look different? I believe one way is by making our marriages great. God continues to show me his plan for marriage through Bible studies and other mature Christian couples. Although I started my marriage with many false ideas, I have not given up hope for a great marriage - one that blesses God and encourages others.

Questions to Consider:

The Greatest Commandment is "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. And love your neighbor as yourself." (Matthew 22:37, 39) Do I love God first – before myself and my spouse?

"A girl needs to be so lost in God that the guy is going to have to seek HIM to find her!" What do you think about that quote? If I am single, am I preparing myself for my possible future spouse – as laid out in Scripture?

Where did I get my idea of marriage . . . from friends, family, TV, Scripture?

Whether or not I am married, do I challenge others to have a great marriage? Do I encourage those that are married to work out their differences in a way that blesses God? Do I encourage those that are single to “cleave” to Jesus?

To those that are married:

Am I an example of a great marriage? Do I want God to prune me so that I can have a great marriage? Am I willing to let God change me and not worry about the work that needs to be done in my spouse? Am I willing to allow God to make me holy, instead of worrying about not being happy? Am I pursuing my spouse? Am I pursuing a better marriage? Do I have a Biblical understanding of my role in marriage? Am I willing to ask forgiveness . . . first?

Husbands:

Am I seeking God and asking Him to help me lead my wife? Do I saturate my wife in the Word as described in Ephesians 5:26? Am I willing to humbly seek my wife’s input in this area?

Wives:

Am I willing to submit to the Lord first, as Ephesians 5:22 describes? Am I willing to humbly seek my husband’s input in this area?

Additional Verses: *Matthew 22:37-39, Psalms 51, Ephesians 5:21-33, Song of Solomon, Proverbs*

This week’s memory verse: *“And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice – the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him.” Romans 12:1*

Additional Marriage Resources:

www.songofsolomon.com www.familylife.com www.focusonthefamily.com

REMINDERS:

February 13, 2011 – **The Gathering at SHU at 6pm.** Brad Gray will be joining us and teaching out of Genesis about God’s initial design for intentions for marriage. You will not want to miss this week!

February 20, 2011 – **3rd: Culture...** Date night @ 1MOSAIC. Tonight we work on the importance of bringing your world and your spouse’s world together regularly for a 3rd world...known as ‘date night’! NOT MARRIED...don’t worry, you can join us for the movie or we’ll have some other 3rd:culture options for ya. **THIS WILL RUN FROM 5-7pm @ SHU!** Child care provided.

February 27, 2011 – **The Gathering at SHU at 6pm.** Dan wraps up the series looking at our 'love affairs'. We are called to be in a love affair with God and our spouse, however we often have many other love affairs that trump & destroy the most important ones!

In **March** we will be talking about . . . **COMMUNITY!!!**