

# What Should I Do?

I Corinthians 7:10-16, 32-39

June 27, 2010

**ON THE LITE SIDE...**

One night, the Potato family sat down to dinner-Mother Potato and her three daughters. Midway through the meal, the eldest daughter spoke up.

"Mother Potato?" she said. "I have an announcement to make."

"And what might that be?" said Mother, seeing the obvious excitement in her eldest daughter's eyes.

"Well," replied the daughter, with a proud but sheepish grin, "I'm getting married!"

The other daughters squealed with surprise as Mother Potato exclaimed, "Married! That's wonderful! And whom are you marrying, Eldest Daughter?"

"I'm marrying a Russet!"

"A Russet!" replied Mother Potato with pride. "Oh, a Russet is a fine tater, a fine tater indeed!"

As the family shared in the eldest daughter's joy, the middle daughter spoke up. "Mother? I, too, have an announcement."

"And what might that be?" encouraged Mother Potato.

Not knowing quite how to begin, the middle daughter paused, then said with conviction, "I, too, am getting married!"

"You, too!" Mother Potato said with joy. "That's wonderful! Twice the good news in one evening! And whom are you marrying, Middle Daughter?"

"I'm marrying an Idaho!" beamed the middle daughter.

"An Idaho!" said Mother Potato with joy. "Oh, an Idaho is a fine tater, a fine tater indeed!"

Once again, the room came alive with laughter and excited plans for the future, when the youngest Potato daughter interrupted. "Mother Potato? Um, I, too, have an announcement to make."

"Yes?" said Mother Potato with great anticipation.

"Well," began the youngest Potato daughter with the same sheepish grin as her eldest and middle sisters before her, "I hope this doesn't come as a shock to you, but I am getting married, as well!"

"Really?" said Mother Potato with sincere excitement. "All of my lovely daughters married! What wonderful news! And whom, pray tell, are you marrying, Youngest Daughter?"

"I'm marrying Peter Jennings!"

"Peter Jennings?" Mother Potato scowled suddenly. "But he's just a common tater!"

## I. The Questions

E. H. Taylor tells this tale at the expense of Bishop Bompas, the first Anglican missionary to venture into the Yukon. The good bishop discovered a tribe of Indians who had never recorded a baptism, a confirmation, or a marriage service. The bishop soon rectified this situation, baptizing and confirming everybody in sight, and winding up by uniting every beaming couple in holy wedlock. Later the tribal chief told Bishop Bompas that his tribe hadn't had so much fun in a month of Sundays.

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Although one in every two married couples ends up divorced, certain categories of marriages have a much higher success rate. A national survey revealed that when two criteria are present--the couple attends church, and they pray together at home--there was only one divorce in one thousand marriages!

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Call it adding insult to injury. A new IRS code implemented in 1994 causes 52 percent of married couples to pay \$1,244 more in Federal Income Tax than an equal-earning non-married couple who live together. In other words, each year the majority of married couples in the United States will pay a \$1,244 penalty for being married.

**II. How should the married Christians respond to the changing circumstances of their lives? I Cor. 7:10-16**

Marriage is a covenant, not a contract. There is a big difference. God made a blood covenant with Abraham in Genesis 15 by cutting five animals in two and laying their carcasses on both sides of a path, with God "walking through" these body parts. This represents the absolutely binding nature of a covenant, for it says that "If I ever violate this covenant, may I be torn in two just like these animals."

Have you thought of your marriage covenant in that way?

Don't ever give up on your marriage, no matter what comes your way. When friction festers into fights, new "oil" is needed to relubricate the relationship. When romance disappears into a dull fog of mundane sameness, fresh oxygen is needed to fan the cooling embers into sparks that will rekindle the glowing flames of love. When chronic financial distress threatens the emotional equilibrium of the home; or when dysfunctions and compulsions surface like white caps in the bay to rock the family boat; or when in-law interference, tangled expectations, health crises or other predictable issues persist as huge problems that won't go away, biblical words of help and encouragement are needed to revive the marriage out of the emergency room and carry it gently into rehabilitative therapy. Whether it's the hot flare-ups of polarization or the long dry dreges of boredom and disillusionment, decide now that you will fight what infects the intimacy of your marriage relationship.

Keep your vows. Never give up. God will reward your faithfulness.

**III. What should Christians who are not married do? I Cor. 7:32-39**

Healthy marriages begin with biblical, practical relationship instruction we give to our teens. It includes giving sound and convincing reasons for sexual abstinence before marriage, raising our teenagers' standards of expectations regarding the kind of marital relationship they are willing to wait for, instead of settling for second best. It involves developing their biblical self-respect and self-confidence so that it will motivate them to catch the vision to skillfully advance beyond the level of intimacy and harmony between husband and wife which they have seen modeled in their own home.

Healthy marriages require strenuous preparation during engagement. At no time in life is a person more motivated to work hard on relational skills than in those few precious months just prior to marriage. That overwhelming sense of optimism and confidence that comes from "feeling in love" provides a unique window of opportunity for a couple-to-be to honestly face issues that normally would be neatly locked deeply beneath their self-protective psychological defense mechanisms. The ancient adage, "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure," is true; facing potential problems in marriage before they say "I do" is vastly preferable to trying to pick up the scattered pieces afterwards.

Healthy marriages need extra encouragement during the parenting years. That is when the initial glowing willingness to sacrifice anything for each other tends to fade (backslide?) into self-centeredness and conflict as life's priorities get powerfully tested by pressures growing concurrently with babies and toddlers.

Healthy marriages still need continual attention in the empty nest years. Cars need regular maintenance. Bodies need physical checkups. Teachers and doctors need continuing education. Workers need training for new skills. It should not seem strange to us, then, that marriages of all stages of life need similar maintenance for healthy relational growth.

--Dale Johnsen

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Marriage is a unique human relationship. Good friend-to-friend relationships are rewarding and good parent-child relationships are important. However, according to Scripture, no other human relationship should receive the degree of attention required for a successful marriage, and no other relationship can provide the satisfaction that a good marriage does.

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**QUOTES ON MARRIAGE...**

A perfect wife is one who doesn't expect a perfect husband.

—Anonymous

He who does not honor his wife dishonors himself. —Anonymous

One of the chief pleasures of middle age is looking back at the people you didn't marry. —Anonymous

And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. —The Bible (KJV): Genesis 2:18

A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband . . .

—The Bible (KJV): Proverbs 12:4

Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favor of the Lord. —The Bible (KJV): Proverbs 18:22

. . . What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. —The Bible (KJV): Matthew 19:6

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, till death do us part. —Book of Common Prayer

Success in marriage is more than finding the right person: it is a matter of being the right person. —Rabbi B. R. Brickner

Rarely are marriages wrecked on a big rock of adversity. It is on the small pebbles that they founder. —Velora Buscher

For a wife take the daughter of a good mother. —Thomas Fuller

He knows little who will tell his wife all he knows. —Thomas Fuller

A wife is not to be chosen by the eye only. Choose a wife rather by your ear than your eye.

—Thomas Fuller, M. D., Gnomologia, No. 1107

He that speaks ill of his wife dishonors himself.

—Thomas Fuller, M. D., Gnomologia

A good wife maketh a good husband. —John Heywood, Proverbs

A happy marriage is the union of two good forgivers. —Robert Quillen

It takes two to make a marriage a success and only one to make it a failure. —Herbert Samuel

Like fingerprints, all marriages are different. —George Bernard Shaw