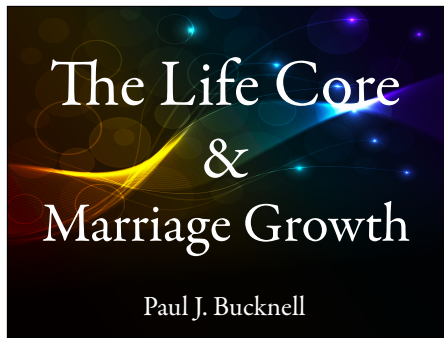




The Life Core

Growing Marriages & The Life Core

- *Growing Marriages* shows how marriages are to grow up into full expressions of Christ and the church as we explore the different growth that is possible at each of the three stages of Christian growth. A horrible marriage reminds us that we have a long way to go in our spiritual life.
- Marriage binds us in covenant to another until death bids us apart and therefore enables us to more deeply refine ourselves and our relationship with our spouse. As we grow in our understanding of God's commitment to bless our marriage, we further deepen our commitment to our spouse and love him/her as God loves us.

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A Biblical Picture of Marriage

(Eph 5:31-33)

31: Marriage is directive: God's statement on the essence of marriage.

32: Marriage is a design: A reflective design after the eternal pattern between God and His people.

33: Marriage is doable

"31 For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh. 32 This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. 33 Nevertheless let each individual among you also love his own wife even as himself; and let the wife see to it that she respect her husband" (Ephesians 5:31-33).

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A Framework for Marriage

God's design and framework of marriage lead to the beauty of intimacy, the two become one flesh, physically and in one's soul and purpose.

Male

Female

Unbiblical Notion of Marriage

Male

Female

Biblical Notion of Marriage

One

Not same direction but no oneness.

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Troubles of Marriage - illustration

- The process of cooking
- Necessity of heat
- Intimacy creates that friction/heat/troubles
- A blend is best; two become one
- Negatively (the losing) or positively (the gaining and refining).
- Marriage, then, is this refining experience offering great rewards.



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Level 1-Commitment and Openness

- Vision: I want to be with him/her!
- Think of the financial costs, pressures, changes of roles, living locations that occur when a couple gets married, and yet they still want to be married!



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Honeymooner's Changing Vision

- Committed
- Desirous
- Commitment often subtly built on one's expectations.

Honeymooner's Challenges

- Unstable and love is unstable
- Hopes dashed
- Hopes regained (make-up)

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Honeymooner's Reactionary Responses

- Gives up (usually temporary) on one's mate - emotionally and physically
- Accepts lower expectations for a time (living by feelings rather than truth - oneness)
- Drops kind behavior and accepts less than acceptable words and actions

Summary

Early marriage is often an expression of 'eros' love and though committal in nature, the commitment tends to be based upon on one's expectations and fulfilled dreams. When the expectations do not pan out, then great ups and downs occur.

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Level 2 - The Challenged Marriage

- Vision: Pursue God's goals of marriage despite temporary setbacks
- The hopes of marriage are charged by a deep commitment to God's hopes that He gives one in His Word.
- Discouragement comes from regressing from the oneness obtained and step back into a focus on one's own wants and desires.



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Young Married Couple's Changing Vision

- Love: I do love being married, but...
- Lost temper: I get really upset with my spouse.
- Lose vision: is this all there is to marriage?

Young Married Couple's Characteristics

- Compromise: I am willing to put my ambitions ahead of our relationship.
- Devious: I fake genuine love to get what I want.
- Adulterous: Entertain thoughts of other relationships as better.

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Young Married Couple's Challenges

- Needs to allow God's Word to bring one to Him to retain that vision and commitment.
- Prayerfully work through difficulties and impasses in the marriage relationship.
- Persistently forgive one another and trust God to meet one's deepest needs.

Summary

God's Word gives hope for the confused couple about their future. Marriage works when one allows God to work through the misunderstandings and make-up times. The young married couple often lives out a worldly 'phileo' love, "As you treat me, I will treat you."

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Level 3 - Mature Responses from God's Love

- Vision: A steady devotion towards one's spouse
- Christ's love is a maturing love, further refining our attitudes, words, and touches enabling us to love those who differ from us or would otherwise cause insecurity in our marriage.



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Mature Married Couple's Love

- I make sacrifices for him/her.
- Sometimes, I am so busy serving my spouse, I forget myself.
- When I am wronged, I can usually quickly forgive.
- The issue is not to get my way, but to see what God is teaching me through my spouse.
- I am trying to discover the needs of my spouse so that I can delight him/her.

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Mature Married Couple's Characteristics

- Relationship with God is stable so the relationship with one's spouse is stable even when there are misunderstandings, disappointments or different expectations.
- Increasingly intimate times with one's mate are not based on beauty but devotion, not on physical intimacy alone but heart oneness.
- One continues to deepen one's relationship with God to unfold deeper insights into God's love, enabling one to further refine his or her love to one's spouse as guided by the Spirit.
- Devoted to being completely content with one's own spouse.

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Summary

An enriching 'agape' love enables the mature believer to avoid selfish binges and demands, and instead focuses on building up one's mate through consistent and kind acts and words, delighting in the resulting oneness of heart and mind bringing peace, joy and love.

Questions for Us

- Think of a troubled marriage and point out how personal/spiritual problems affect their marriage.
- Have you ever seen a great marriage? What characteristics have you seen of these good marriages?
- Identify one or more personal qualities in your life that need to be worked on to have an intimate marriage. How might each affect one's marriage?

The Life Core
&
Marriage Growth

Paul J. Bucknell