

'As Long as We Both Shall Live'



Rob Pue

I love my wife. In fact, those who know me, know that I often wear a T shirt that says just that... just a plain black T shirt with the words: *"I Love My Wife."* Wearing this shirt in public never fails to stir a reaction and start a conversation. With most people, it's as if they've never seen anything so strange – a guy wearing a T shirt that says, *"I Love My Wife"* on it.

Usually the women will smile and say something like, *"Oh, that's so sweet."* But most often the men will laugh at me and say something like, *"Did your wife buy that for you?"* Or, *"Did your wife make you wear that?"* *"Nope,"* I smile. *"I bought it myself!"* Most just shake their heads and laugh.

But why is it so strange, so odd, so laughable that a man would want to proclaim to the world that he loves his wife? Sadly, that's how things are in this day and age. More common is the married man who will complain to his co-workers and friends about his *"old ball and chain."* Or call her something like *"my old lady."* And then there are the wives, who complain to THEIR friends about their fat, old lazy husband. Such seems to be the state of marriage in our world today.

God's Word, however, says otherwise, about His design and intent for marriage. Proverbs 18:22, *"He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the Lord."* THAT is

an understatement if ever there was one! My wife is the most precious gift God has ever given me in this life. I can't imagine life without her.

God designed marriage to be the union of one man and one woman, and it was meant to be for life. Jesus Himself said that the very idea of divorce was a man-made concept. *"...because of the hardness of your heart,"* He said. And then He went on: *"But from the beginning of the creation, God made them male and female. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh; so then they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let no man put asunder."*

But now, almost 50% of all marriages are "put asunder." Studies show that the average marriage in America today lasts only about eight years. That's long enough for the couple to have children, but not long enough for the couple to raise them in an intact home, and so the children must suffer the breakup of their family and lose the security of their home. Studies also show that this always leaves the children with life-long emotional scars.

Surely the enemy of our souls is wreaking havoc on our families today. The very definition of "family" has been changed in recent years to mean whatever we want it to mean – two "Mommies," two "Daddies," a "Daddy" with two "Mommies," a "Mommy, a Daddy and Mommy's 'special friend.'" ... whatever.

What's more, many of today's young people are not even GETTING married to begin with anymore. Cohabitation – living together without being married – has increased by 900% since 1970. It seems people want to "test drive" a potential spouse before committing to marriage. But study after study shows that those who live together before marriage have a 35% higher divorce rate than those who don't.

I'm grieved by the fact that there are so very many couples today who are unhappy in their marriages and so many that are divorcing. Indeed being UNhappily married seems to be the "norm" today. If you're happy in your marriage and you actually love your spouse, YOU are the strange one. Just wear a T shirt like mine and see the reaction you get.

Yet as newlyweds, young couples are so in love with one another. They love to spend time together, they love and serve one another and they work hard in their relationship to bless each other and please each other and satisfy each other's needs. But sadly, it's now expected that the couple will most certainly grow apart the longer they're married; as if that's just a natural and normal eventuality. Life gets hard, people get bored and discontented. There are bills to pay and work to be done. Most of all, people become selfish and self-centered. But again, that's not God's design for marriage—or family.

In fact, it's precisely BECAUSE of those hard times that MY marriage has become stronger, because we've gone through those hard times TOGETHER, and WITH GOD at the center of our union. Would life be any less difficult doing it alone? If you're discontented in your marriage, will you not STILL be discontented if you're alone? If you divorce will there not STILL be bills to pay and work to be done? Do you think any of that will be easier doing it ALONE? Or is it just your intention to "trade up" to a "newer model" spouse, simply because you've become bored with the original? THAT is the DEFINITION of "selfish" and "self-centered."

The only biblical reason for a couple ever to divorce is because of unfaithfulness and infidelity. Yet even issues like these can be worked out, with repentance and grace. Sadly though, many are just not interested in doing the work it takes to keep their marriage, family and home intact. We live in a "throw-away" society, where there's no longer any sort of stigma attached to living together unmarried or to

having an extra-marital sexual or emotional relationship or to being divorced. These things, like just about everything else the devil could dream up, are considered perfectly “normal” today. But whatever happened to “‘til death do we part?” Or, “as long as we both shall live?” Indeed – a few years ago my wife and I attended a wedding where the couple changed those time-honored vows to say: “As long as we both shall LOVE.” In other words, “as long as we still have this same emotional feeling we have for each other today, but after that, no promises.” So much for the sanctity of the marriage covenant.

My advice, if you want to hear it, is do not live together UNTIL you’re married. Keep your marriage bed pure. Take your vows before God – and take them seriously – and then INCLUDE God and Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit IN your marriage. Those who serve as witnesses in your wedding party are there for just that reason: they are WITNESSES of the vows you’re taking before God. Choose your wedding party wisely – make sure they are GODLY people, who are not just there to wear the shiny dress or the neat tuxedo and stand there looking good.

You see, most people don’t realize that your maid of honor, your best man and your other wedding party witnesses are there to hold you accountable to those vows you make. Unfortunately, what most often happens, is people choose their best friends to “stand up” in the wedding. And then when trouble comes in the marriage, they run to those same “best friends” to complain about their spouse and cry on their shoulders. Then, instead of those witnesses giving the troubled couple Godly counsel and helping to build the marriage up, the bridesmaids say, “Whatever makes you happy, you go girl...” and the groomsmen say, “man, you don’t have to put up with all this... there’s plenty of fish in the sea.” So instead of doing their JOB and making sure the couple remains faithful to their vows, they actually ENCOURAGE separation, infidelity and divorce – if it makes their friends “happy.” Instead of helping to BUILD your marriage and help you weather

the storms of life that WILL come, they're actually undermining your marriage, under the guise of being your "friends." We need a return to moral absolutes. And if we take a vow before God, we'd better MEAN it.

I understand life today is complicated, busy, filled with distractions and it can be easy to become discouraged, discontented and depressed. Life can be overwhelming. But do not forsake your marriage vows. And with Christ at the center of your marriage, you never will. Yet many today have little to no time for God – unless they need something. They may have a FORM of Godliness, (or today it's more likely to be a form of "spirituality,") but it's a faith with no power. I don't know how anyone can get through this life without a close, abiding relationship with Jesus – married or unmarried. And as we know, a cord of three strands is not easily broken. So keep Christ at the center of your marriage and you will weather the storms of life together and come out stronger at the end.

I'd also advise you to turn off the TV, turn off the phones, tablets, computers, and other distractions and focus on your spouse more. It's easy to come home at the end of a long work day and collapse in your favorite chair and then turn on some time-wasting, mind-numbing "entertainment" on the television. Or for a married couple to sit together in the same room hour after hour, never speaking or even looking at one another. Instead, they're looking at their phone, or some other distraction. "Device" usage has become epidemic. It's an addiction. I'd advise you to unplug – and then interact with the one you love.

What would be more profitable for your marriage? Spending night after night watching TV or Facebook – or giving your husband or wife a back rub or a foot massage after a long hard day at work? As you SERVE the other person, you will find you're not only blessing THEM, but YOU will also be filled with more loving emotions for them – and find YOURSELF

equally, if not more blessed because of your loving service. And if you haven't had a good relationship for a while and you don't "feel" that love you think you need to have BEFORE you can serve them – just trust me: do the ACTIONS first and the feelings will quickly follow. If you still can't bring yourself to serve your spouse with a pure, loving heart, then do it the Colossians 3:23 way: *"as unto the Lord, and not to men."*

If you have children, you'll also be modeling a good marriage for THEM. They watch everything you do, you know. Husbands, love your wives properly and your daughters will learn the attributes to look for in a man when it comes time for THEM to get married. Likewise, your sons will learn how to properly treat their future wives. And when Mom and Dad have a good, solid, strong relationship, it helps the children to feel much more safe and secure and loved themselves.

So SERVE each other. Don't think only about yourself and your needs which you perceive as not being met. If you're in a troubled marriage, your needs probably AREN'T being met – but consider also that neither are your spouse's needs being met. Do YOUR part first. Some will say they just CAN'T – they don't "feel" it. Things have gone too far down the wrong path and there's no love in the marriage anymore. They'll say they can't serve their spouse because they have fallen out of love... they may even be at the point where the very sight of their spouse makes their blood boil and they feel nothing but contempt for their partner.

That's very sad, indeed. But again: do the ACTIONS first, and the feelings will follow. You know, a lot of the problems that couples encounter in marriages stem from one thing, and the devil uses it very effectively against us: PRIDE. How often we have arguments with our wives or husbands, and then days and weeks go by... you may not even remember what the original argument was about anymore. Yet the hurt gets worse and the heart gets harder, the longer you remain prideful and

stubborn.

How do you counter this and ruin the devil's plans to hurt you both – and maybe even destroy your marriage? SIMPLE: you drop your pride. Whatever the argument was about, it doesn't matter. Whoever was wrong; doesn't matter. Even if you still believe you were absolutely in the right and your spouse was absolutely and completely wrong about EVERYTHING – even if you believe you're the victim and your spouse "owes" you something. Just forget all that. Drop your pride. Go to him or her, hug them and just say, "*I'm sorry.*" Try that. You will see that invisible wall of separation between the two of you crumble before your very eyes. Your relationship will be restored within seconds.

Then you can talk about things more, communicate better, kiss and "make up." Rather than letting an unresolved issue simmer and boil to the point of divorce, YOU have the power to fix things in an instant of time, by simply letting go of your pride and saying two little words, "*I'm sorry.*"

Marriage is meant to be one of God's greatest blessings in this life. A husband and wife, together as one, with Christ at the center of their union, and a home filled with children... and eventually grandchildren, brought up and raised in the fear and admonition of the Lord. It's so sad that we forsake such unfathomable blessings because of our own selfish, foolish pride... because we allow distractions and the cares of this world to drive a wedge between us... because we allow the enemy of our souls to distract us with discontentment, even though we are so amazingly blessed. Friends, count those blessings, love your spouse, get rid of the pride and soften your heart; SERVE the one you love and thank God for them. Pray FOR them and WITH them. If you do these things you'll find you have a marriage that others will envy and one which makes God smile with joy. The Lord loves us; let us love our spouses with powerful love like THAT.

Audio CDs and transcripts of this message are available when you call me at Wisconsin Christian News, (715) 486-8066. Or email Rob@WisconsinChristianNews.com and ask for message number 280.

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