

Daughters

Fellowship • Encouragement • Exhortation

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Monday, 20 October 2008

Dear Girls,

WEDDING CEREMONY—PART 3

Sermon

[Ed Rademaker – based on Psalm 128v1-4]

The Blessing of a Happy Home

Pete and Genevieve, family and friends, “The Blessing of a Happy Home!” - that’s the title of this meditation. How *blessed* or how *happy* is everyone who *fears* the Lord. Sounds a bit of a contradiction. How do you join happiness and fear?

As far as most people are concerned, Pete and Genevieve, you couldn’t have a more unacceptable wedding text than this one. But, oh, what a beautiful wedding song for two young people who love the Lord!

The writer of this Psalm is obviously a man who knows that true happiness is only to be found when one humbles himself and gives his life to the Lord Jesus.

Fearing the Lord

To fear the Lord doesn’t at all mean to be afraid of the Lord, to live in terror of Him. No, it means to respect and reverence Him, to stand in awe of Him, to take Him and His Bible very seriously. Seriously enough to want to shape your life and your marriage in line with the message of the Bible. But it’s clear from the rest of the Bible that a man will only be able to fear the Lord God if he has been forgiven, pardoned by God, reconciled to God through believing in Jesus Christ.

Even Psalm 130 speaks of this when it says that there is forgiveness with the Lord, that He may be feared.

So the major statement of this Psalm is the first verse, “How blessed is everyone who fears the Lord, who walks in His ways.”

Blessed labour

Now the next two verses are a practical outworking of this statement as it applies in the workplace and in the home. He says, “When you shall eat of the fruit of your hands, you will be happy, and it will be well with you.” With this statement he indicates that the Lord blesses with prosperity the labours of those who fear Him. To be sure, *we* must work diligently, but

Psalm 128v1-4
1 Blessed *is* every one who fears the LORD, who walks in His ways.
2 When you eat the labor of your hands, you *shall be* happy, and *it shall be* well with you.
3 Your wife *shall be* like a fruitful vine in the very heart of your house, your children like olive plants all around your table.
4 Behold, thus shall the man be blessed who fears the LORD.

in the end, the enjoyment of the results of our work is still a gift from God. This is the *general* rule. Of course, God at times makes exceptions to this rule for the sake of the spiritual well-being of His people. Hardship, financial, is a gracious discipline that some must go through. In any case, the man who fears God will be enabled, even in the midst of such hardship, to be happy and content because he knows God loves him and is in control.

Blessed home life

The second area of application is the home. "Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine within your house. Your children like olive plants around your table." This man's wife is compared to a grapevine. The grapevine needs support, yet it provides that which makes glad a man's heart! And the olive plant, to which his sons are compared, were a symbol of life and vitality.

As one writer has put it, "As the vine and the olive yielded the greatest refreshment and were emblems of the greatest gladness, so here they are put for the exquisite delights flowing to a good man through his wife and children."

Here we have another general rule. God gives marital and family bliss to the man who serves and fears Him. A happy, affectionate and supportive wife is the normal lot of this man. And obedient, respectful and loving children are also the normal lot of this man. Of course, again, the Lord may withhold these blessings from some of His children for His own gracious reasons and purposes for them. That is up to Him. But we learn here that nevertheless this is the general rule.

Truly, the picture painted for us here is one of a happy home. And so the truth of this text is that: *The Lord God blesses with a happy home those who fear Him.*

It means that here we have the 'secret' of ***true marital and parental happiness.***

Happily ever after

Pete and Genevieve, because you love and fear the Lord and walk in His ways, you have the promise and hope here that you will experience in your marriage and family life, as the Lord so blesses your union with children, true happiness and contentedness.

This is the sort of thing most young couples, when they marry, are hoping for. They marry with the hope of living happily every after. But so often the actual experience of married and family life falls far short of that romantic fairytale ideal.

Instead of marital and parental happiness, there is much disillusionment and cynicism around.

But there are many of us here today who can testify from personal experience that the joy we receive from our marriage partner and children is like a foretaste of heaven; that in terms of fulfilment in human relationships, we enjoy the most exciting and happy life with marriage partners who love the Lord and children who love, obey and respect their parents in the Lord.

That doesn't mean that there are never hardships or difficult times in our relationships, because we are still far from perfect; but by His Word and Spirit, God enables us to overcome and even mature out of these difficulties, giving us the tools and grace to work through our differences and maintain unity and consistent harmony.

These verses tell us that this sort of family happiness described here is a *gift* from God that He gives to people under certain conditions. That leads us to the question: Why? Why does the Lord bless with a happy home those who fear Him?



Singing before the sermon

Two answers to that.

*For Christ's sake
Firstly, the Lord loves and
rewards those who fear Him,
for the sake of Jesus Christ.*

In the Psalm before this one, we read that “children are a gift of the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward.” A reward! God rewards obedience with certain gifts; they are gracious rewards. We don't deserve what He gives us. This is something *Jesus* alone has earned for

all who trust Him. Jesus perfectly obeyed God in our place and then paid the penalty for our disobedience, also in our place.

Therefore, He does reward *us*, in love and grace. He says to you, Pete and Genevieve, “You fear Me; you trust Me, you walk in My ways? Very well then, I will give you children, blessed children, and I will bless your marriage with happiness since you are undertaking this step in the fear of the Lord, since you are taking Me and My Word very seriously in your wedding and marriage.”

You needn't *expect* any different.

On the other hand, for those who do not fear Him, who do not take Jesus Christ seriously, who live their lives the way *they* want to, He withholds such happiness and true fulfilment from them. They may experience some practical fruit and benefits from applying Biblical principles, as it suits them, to their family and relationships; but that spiritual dimension of joy and warmth and unconditional love, that elusive fulfilment and lasting contentedness that only come from God, will be entirely lacking.

Lives of obedience

The *second* reason why true marital and parental happiness is experienced by those who fear the Lord is because *they seek to live according to the Maker's instructions*.

The God who made us and who instituted the whole idea of marriage and parenting has given us instructions in His Word, the Bible, as to how we are to treat one another as marriage partners and how we are to bring up our children.

We ignore these to our own hurt.

Now, it is only the one who fears and trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ who will seek consistently and prayerfully to live by and apply those directions and principles for family life.

You see it here in this Psalm. In verse one we find that the man who fears the Lord actually walks in His ways, ie he is careful to submit his life in every area to the laws that God has laid out in the Bible.

So we find that *he* is the one who labours to provide for the physical/material needs of his

family. It is the fruit of *his* labour that he and, of course, his household eats.

And we also find that his wife is fruitful within his house, indicating that the appropriate place and primary role of the wife is in the home supporting her husband and raising their children for the Lord.

As one commentator has put it, “The strong (Hebrew) word for ‘within’ which refers to the wife directly is in marked contrast to what is said of the promiscuous wife in Proverbs 7v11” - it says there, “She is boisterous and rebellious; her feet do not remain at home.” In other words, the godly wife remains faithful to the husband of her youth.

Lives much different from the norm in western society

Our western society in general laughs and scoffs at this whole idea of the man being the bread-winner and the poor little woman locked away at home with the screaming kids. Of course, this latter image is a caricature of the truth, for the God-fearing woman is not locked away at home as if she would rather be anywhere else. On the contrary, this is exactly where she wants to be, and where she thrives and is in her element, making her house a wonderful home and refuge for her family from the storms and harshness of life in this world, a place of warmth and safety for her husband and children as well as a welcoming haven for her guests.

This is where she invests her intelligence, creativity, personality, faith, godliness, knowledge, wisdom and gifts into her children’s hearts and lives as she trains and teaches them and raises her sons to be leaders in the church and community, her daughters to be godly wives, mothers and homemakers and all her children to be effective and faithful builders of God’s kingdom on earth in their various callings.

Both she and her husband recognise that there can be no greater occupation, no higher calling in this life and world for the God-fearing woman than this!

And God has purposed and made us this way so that this marital and family arrangement is the pathway to family happiness and stability.

Our society has largely abandoned these Maker’s instructions so that it is little wonder that we see so much family breakdown, so much misery in our homes and society in NZ and elsewhere.

In addition, God also says, Wives, submit to your husbands, Husbands, love your wives in an entirely self-sacrificial way.

Any couple who has earnestly tried to live this way in the dependence on the Lord’s strengthening, have found that this is the way a marriage can function in a happy and lasting way.

I have yet to meet a couple who reject this principle and are experiencing true lasting marital happiness and fulfilment. It’s impossible.

Again, the God-fearing man seeks to apply loving discipline to his children as they grow up. He



Ed Rademaker is married to Carolyn, his wife of 25 years, and has five children: three sons, Joel, Nathaniel (married to Sharon), Daniel, and two daughters, Jessica and Jacinta, ranging between the ages of 13 and 24. He has one grand-daughter, Marielle, and another grand-child on the way. He and his family are members of Palmerston North Reformed Church. He has experienced about 14 years of pastoral ministry in the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, and is currently preaching regularly in a Reformed home mission work in Wanganui, while working three part-time jobs. Ed is available to do marriage counselling, using the Bible as his manual. Concerning church ministry he is persuaded that the biblical model is the family-integrated one, and would seriously entertain a call to ministry in such a church. Ed also has an interest in languages, particularly Spanish, which he studied as his major in a university Arts degree. He is also familiar with Dutch, German and French, and is currently teaching E.A.L. (English as an Additional Language) to a couple of individual pupils.

Photo by Seanna Hollinger



doesn't spare the rod and he teaches them the Word of God. He prays for them and with them. He trains them to recognize the difference between good and evil as God sees them and to choose the right.

Anyone can testify: the general rule is that children who are brought up in this way truly are a blessing, a joy to have in one's life.

Our society, in its so called wisdom, has rejected the whole idea of Biblical discipline and so is for the most part raising a generation of self-centred, self-willed, disrespectful, ill-mannered youth.

No wonder they stop at having one or two children and can't imagine how anyone would want even just three children let alone four, five, six or more. But the Christian understands the desire to have lots of children. He and she know they're a blessing when they are brought up following the Maker's instructions.

Conclusion

Pete and Genevieve, may the Lord give you the grace you need consistently to walk in His ways, to continue in your marriage as you have begun today, even as you do fear Him.

And may He indeed bless you with a wildly happy marriage in Christ and with children who will bring you great joy as you seek to raise them for the Lord and in His ways.

Amen.

Song

[Ed Rademaker]

We will now sing Psalm 128, *Blest the Man That Feareth Jehovah*, which you can find in your ceremony booklets.

The whole bridal party stands again at this point.

[...continued next week, Lord willing, with the vows...]

For the Greater Glory of God through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,

Genevieve de Deugd
Issacharian Wife