

The Good Stuff...

From the folks back home

Plea by Branch

*Father teach me just how to die
For I fear my will has grown too strong
Strip away my false humility
And grant that I boast solely in the cross*

*Father teach me just how to die
For my ear loves to hear praise from man
Take my drive to be recognized
And grant that my life only point to You*

*You're worthy
The only one who's worthy
Jesus, You are worthy
The only one who's worthy*

*Father teach me just how to die
Forgive me when I think You owe me
something
Instill God fear within my bones
Lord, I surrender, I am Yours*

This year's Women's Retreat focused on John 15:1-17. This song was very inspiring as we prepared for the Women's Retreat. I encourage you to listen to it by copying the link below. The song is by Branch on the album Desperate for Real.

<http://www.amazon.com/Plea/dp/B0013F47Q4>
Enjoy!
Karen

Dear far flung ones,

This edition of "the Good Stuff" focuses on encouraging you in your marriage and family relationships. This stuff is the hardest reality check most of us face about our spiritual condition. When we were single and we looked in the mirror, there was a faint resemblance to Jesus. Once we got married, we realized it was Paul, not Jesus. Still good, just not that good. When we added kids to the mix, some days it seemed like we resembled Judas more than anyone.

Family, it seems, is God's favorite arena for sanctification, or at least it is for me. Nothing makes me more aware of my sin and of my need for grace. My situation was apparently so desperate that God determined that it would take 5 children, not the usual 2.3, to convince me of my spiritual bankruptcy and compel me to seek Him and His grace with greater and greater passion. I know that I am not alone in this. So I invited our elders and staff to share stuff (scriptures, books, blogs, etc...) that have been encouraging to them along the way. I trust that they will be an encouragement to you all.

As for my single brothers and sisters, I am confident that you are mature enough to glean wisdom from all of this for your own situation. Having said that, I realize that you are facing your own extraordinarily sanctifying situation as well. I ran across this helpful list of blogs and resources for singles that I hope will directly encourage you.

<http://chizadek.wordpress.com/2008/05/31/resources-on-singleness/>

My personal contribution to this compilation of family resources is this insightful description of love by Paul Tripp.

<http://monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/onsite/lovespouse.html>

So very thankful for you all!

Larry

Love is patient, love is kind.



Blog Spot

By
Greg Mathias

Here is a short blog post on "behaving in love" toward your spouse. I've used it with a few couples. Short read; not exhaustive but good conversation starter-

<http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/tgc/2012/03/08/when-i-dont-feel-love-for-my-spouse/>

Recommended Reading List

by
Sam Williams, Ph.D

Tim Keller's new book, "The Meaning of Marriage," is an excellent read.

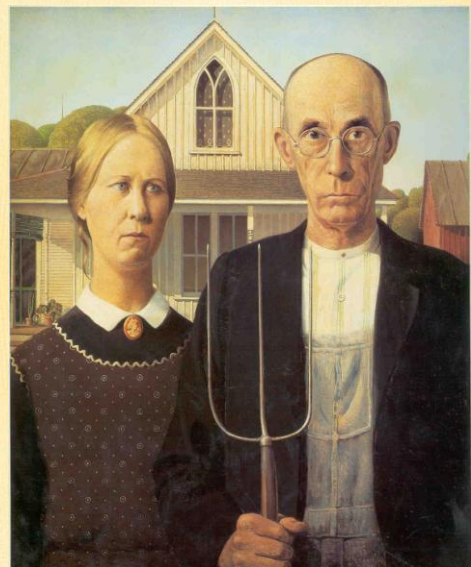
"Sacred Marriage," is a wonderful practical theology of the trials of marriage.

"When Sinners Say I Do," by Dave Harvey is good seeing oneself truly.

"How to Act Right When my Spouse Acts Wrong," by L. Vernicke is great when you think (and you may!) have a problematic spouse.

"Get Outa My Face," by Rick Horne is good for dealing with contentious kids.

Paul Tripp's book, "What did You Expect?" on marriage is challenging. It is on sale \$10, and DVD on sale \$15 at WTS.edu.



"We read to know we are not alone" C.S. Lewis

Dear Friends,

I trust that those of you who are married are not struggling to the degree of the one to whom this letter is written, but the principles found here are helpful as a basis for any relationship: husband to wife; parent to child or friend to friend. So perhaps God will encourage you from these thoughts. Knowing that you are the object of God's special affection, but that you are also the target of your enemy's fiercest attack, I pray that you will be aware of the schemes sent to destroy you so that you may turn them to the glory of God. May God richly bless you!

Stuart Bulman

"A Letter to a friend"

Dear Brother,

For years your marriage and family has been a place of great stress and conflict as each of you sees the need for change in the other. The most significant hope for change however has come recently when you expressed that any meaningful change in your family will begin with you. If ANY of your hope is based in the expectation that your wife will change, you will continue this cycle of destruction. Marriage is **NOT** about us— our satisfaction, happiness and companionship even though these are by-products of a healthy marriage. Marriage **IS** about God's glory and our determination to serve Christ by the way we serve our wives. With that fact firmly established in my thinking, I will be able at that moment to be released from much of my burden in a strained relationship, because I know that I am pleasing Christ who will reward me for the good work of service that I do for Him. My focus is not on the reaction of my wife, but on the judgment of my King who sees not just my actions, but also the heart behind the actions. If in humility, I choose to respond patiently, think compassionately, act mercifully, God knows that this cannot be done absent of faith. And whatever I do by faith is deposited in my heavenly account which is secure for all eternity. Therefore, a strained relationship is my great opportunity for heavenly gain! (James 1:2) Yes, the watching world and even our unbelieving hearts cannot comprehend such an attitude because they (and we in the flesh) are all looking for "it" right now. We want it fixed- NOW. We need relief- NOW. The cardiologist tells us that if we don't get relief from the strain (by leaving), it will kill us. But there is no relief by simply walking out the door. That is an illusion. Relief is found the instant the Christ follower rightly casts their cares on Him!

Assuming then that this is the correct heart attitude, how then can such a change be accomplished?

I'm glad you asked! ☺

The foremost, absolutely **first thing** I must do is to rightly prioritize my own life. (Matthew 6:33) The struggle is not how to get someone else to change, but how to be transformed— to have my mind renewed. There is nothing more important than finding a place and time to begin your day with an extended time with God. If that means you have to get up at 4:00 AM, then go to bed leaving sufficient time to awaken refreshed. Yes, I know that it is a struggle to have your family (your wife in particular) leave you in peace to accomplish this. Here, we may be able to help by working on a marriage agreement with some consequences that establishes a time limit for discussions. I know these have not been honored in the past. Perhaps, we can press here to encourage this to become a reality. More praying / discussion / problem solving needs to be done here to reach a solution— but you must soak in God's word to be changed. The point is to be determined to pursue this until you reach a solution. There is no alternative! As you quoted Peter, "to whom else shall we go?" This brings me to the second point. We don't go to God simply because we have exhausted all other solutions and found them deficient – even though that may be true. Rather, we go to God because No one loves like Him. He is perfect in wisdom. Nothing is outside of His control. He perfectly loves me. He plainly tells that that in every event, circumstance, scenario, He is actively working for my good. He intercedes for me, provides for me and sustains me. He CANNOT fail. It is impossible. So as The One who knows me perfectly and knows the end as well as He knows the present, he is lovingly directing all things for my good. The fact that the circumstances are not pleasant is also for my good. I'm not a marsh mellow that floats along in a stagnant swamp. I am a man being shaped by the Almighty for Glory- His Glory in which I get to share. (Hebrews 12:7; Romans 8:17) This is the essence of those who live by faith. The circumstance is often counter to the reality of the good work that God is doing. The story is far from over. The end is predetermined and it is good for all those who are called according to His purpose knowing that NOTHING can separate me from the love of Christ. To think anything less is unbelief from which we must repent.

So then rather than simply laying aside anger at the difficulty of my present circumstance, I must embrace a pattern of thanksgiving. (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18) The power to overcome discontentment is simply found in thanksgiving. It is my failure to be thankful born out of my unbelief that leaves me in a dungeon of great stress and pain. But the prison door is not latched. I can push it open with thanksgiving anytime I choose. I must then so choose not only for my own joy, but also for the souls of so many others who watch to see if this Christ that I profess is real. From this position, we will be able to clearly see how to minister to those around us, especially our wives. Finally, you **must follow through**. It is common indeed to know the good that we ought to do and not do it. It is also sin; open rebellion against a just God. (James 4:17) "But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him. But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved." Hebrews 10:38-39

Brother, I pray that you will meditate on these truths until Christ sets you free by them.

Blessings!

Stuart



"Give Them Grace"

One excellent parenting resource I have come across lately is, Give Them Grace by Elyse M. Fitzpatrick and Jessica Thompson. This resource isn't your run of the mill parenting book! It challenges parents to refocus their parenting to become more Christ-centered and Gospel saturated. Here's a helpful review.

"This is not just a book on parenting; this is deep training in the gospel. Elyse Fitzpatrick shows parents how to model themselves after the heavenly Father, who changed his children not by wrath and the law but by grace. A lot of books talk about gospel-centeredness in theory; this book shows you how to apply it to one of life's most important relationships."

—J. D. Greear, Lead Pastor, The Summit Church, Durham, North Carolina

Here are 3 excellent, challenging, excerpts from Give Them Grace...

<http://theresurgence.com/2011/06/03/dazzle-your-children-with-the-gospel-of-grace>

<http://theresurgence.com/2011/06/17/do-you-teach-your-kids-the-gospel-or-law>

<http://theresurgence.com/2011/07/05/gods-beautiful-holy-goodand-crushinglaw>

You can purchase Give Them Grace by visiting http://www.amazon.com/Give-Them-Grace-Dazzling-Jesus/dp/1433520095/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1329849701&sr=8-1

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Stephanie



I could recommend several books for marriage, but the one that impacted my marriage the most was "Sacred Marriage" by Gary Thomas and the best parenting book I have read was "Shepherding a Child's Heart" by Ted Tripp.

For more on marriage **email me**. I can send you a PDF of a worksheet that helps husbands and wives identify weak areas in their marriage roles.

Jake

[jakem@northwake.com]

From Daniel's Desk

Great for families!

CD: All About Love (Steven Curtis Chapman)

Songs:

"Dancing in the Minefields"
Andrew Peterson

"World Traveler"
Andrew Peterson