



Solomon on Sex

Why Have A Wedding?

Small Group Work Sheet

February 19, 2012

Part 1 - Ice Breaker

- Have you given away *Solomon on Sex Invitation Cards* this week? To whom? How did it go?
 - If you are married, share the details about your wedding. What was the most memorable moment? What was the funniest moment?
1. What did you do this week for Valentines Day?

Part 2 - Sermon Review

2. What about the ancient Jewish marriage tradition do you like better than the way we do the weddings today? What do you like about our culture's marriage tradition more than the Jewish cultures?
3. Do you think we celebrate enough as Christians? How should we do a better job of celebrating?
4. In what ways should a husband provide a covering of protection and provision for his wife?
5. Read Revelation 19:6-8. How does your new understanding of the ancient wedding ceremony help you understand the great final wedding ceremony called "The Marriage Supper of the Lamb?"
6. Chances are, you will run into friends who choose to cohabit. How will you talk to them about the benefits of marriage? What from this sermon is most helpful?

Part 3 - Digging Deeper - Understanding Our Cultures Radical Skepticism of Marriage.¹

What did everyone—i.e., the baby boomers—expect? As the unmarried mother of a new baby, I am the object of much indignant scrutiny among the older generations, who seem to have conveniently forgotten the past 30 years, in which almost everyone I know has been emotionally pummeled in some way by divorce. As my boyfriend asked at a recent family gathering, while playing a board game in which you have to prompt the other players to supply a particular word: “What must you do before you get married?” The answer, of course: get divorced. My father and his wife thought this was hilarious. And yet aging boomers seem shocked and befuddled that someone would choose to avoid the whole swampy mess of broken vows and failed traditions that they’ve left in their wake....

The worst is from my parents. “Marriage is very important,” my mother said. “It establishes a bond that you just can’t get otherwise.” I wanted to argue with her, but she was getting ready to leave the country with her new husband. They spend their summers at their cottage up in Nova Scotia, a good 20-hour trip away from the rest of us. “Studies show that married couples are better off financially than single people,” my father’s youngish second wife insisted. It’s probably true that she is better off financially since marrying my father, but I wasn’t sure how that applied to me. When my boyfriend and I looked into getting married, we found out that we would pay an extra \$2,000 each year in taxes.

If marriage is risky, doomed and expensive, well, why bother? “You just should,” my father offered in that magnanimous, ain’t-life-grand manner he developed shortly after re-entering the singles scene when I was a teenager. My father is big on the “shoulds” of life, with some reason. He has always done everything he was supposed to, even as a divorced father; he never even bad-mouthed my mom (nor did she ever trash him, for that matter). But the fact that my parents divorced well—and they really did—doesn’t grant them immunity from their actions. The fact that my uncles and aunts and grandparents and family friends felt they had absolutely no choice other than to divorce doesn’t change the outcome. They still got divorced, all of them. They still showed my generation, by example and by forcing us to go along with their example, that marriage was something easily and amicably exited from. Marriage, they said, was not that big of a deal. Premarital sex is fine. (Or at least that’s what they implied when they presented their boyfriends and girlfriends at the breakfast table—before we were even out of high school.) Families, they said, do not need to stay together if things become too boring.

I would have more sympathy for divorced people if their lives had improved by getting out of terrible marriages that (apparently) couldn’t be survived for another moment. But the ones I’m familiar with continue to associate with flawed human beings. These second and third marriages still seem to require work, and still have shortcomings. My mother and father, for example, still struggle with the same issues that plagued their marriage to each other. The only difference is, older and wiser, they both seem more willing to compromise, to sacrifice and to accept. I am not whining about or regretting the events of the last three decades. When my parents divorced in the late ’70s, we children went along with it like troupers. When they started bringing home boyfriends and girlfriends in the ’80s, we ultimately accepted these new people into our family. Sometimes, the new people went away. And we dealt with the divorces and separations all over again. And accepted the new people all over again. Fine. Exhausting, but fine. It’s a wonder we 18- to 35-year-olds even have the energy to date. (And maybe some of us don’t.) But for myself, the scattered, patchwork concept of family I grew up with has only increased my quest for commitment. I’ve seen firsthand the pain and futility of divorce culture and I don’t intend to relive it, or to drag my children through the nightmare of watching their parents flirt with strangers. My decision not to marry does not indicate a desire for a life of debauchery and half-formed commitments. Quite the opposite ... but we have no fantasies about coasting through the next 50 years on the coattails of a weakened and disparaged contract that, thanks to boomer innovation, now includes options like pre-nup clauses. Considering everything we’ve seen, bearing the weight of our relationship on our own backs seems a hell of a lot wiser than leaning on the white-laced and satin-cummerbunded follies of our parents. Thanks, but we’re looking for more than just a party, a round of toasts and a validity stamp from Uncle Sam to get us to that golden anniversary. Our parents, on the other hand, seem to believe in marriage more than they do in monogamy. Like I said, that’s fine. Every generation has its torch to carry. But when this particular generation, which grooved to its own beat and stomped on every tradition that seemed too square, too inhibiting or just plain boring, turns around with nostalgia in its eyes and questions my choices, I have to protest. My generation would just as soon steer clear of the fatuous, feel-good mess of getting divorced and remarried. The tradition that was passed down to us—in which divorce is a logical and expected conclusion to a marriage—is one we would just as soon pass by.... Of course marriage is on the decline. But don’t blame us. The boomers started it.

¹ Larissa Phillips, “The Case Against Matrimony.” This article first appeared in Salon.com, at <http://www.salon.com>. An on-line version remains in the Salon archives. Reprinted with permission.