

Intro:

This afternoon we are going to do something we have never done before.

We may never do it again! (Although I don't think so!)

I am not sure when we will do it again, but I think that what we will do today will be helpful to you and is likely we should do semi-regularly, although I am not going to commit to a regular schedule of it.

What we are doing is giving a book review instead of a sermon.

Today we are actually giving two book reviews; we'll interrupt them by a song.

The two books are books I read recently, both of which I think can be profitable to you. They were profitable to me as I read them.

Now, I suppose we should have a Scripture to start with, so I'd like you to turn to Ecclesiastes 12 and look at a verse there:

Read Eccl 12.12

Now, Solomon was writing that about 3000 years ago. That was about 2500 years before the printing press. Think of all the books that have been written since then. His words are more true now than they were then, I think. (If that's possible!)

The two books we will look at this afternoon are these:

25 Surprising Marriages, by William J. Petersen, Timothy Press, 1997, 2006 rpt.

Will Medicine Stop the Pain?, by Elyse Fitzpatrick and Laura Hendrickson, Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2006.

Without further ado, we'll start with the first of these books:

I. 25 Surprising Marriages

- Subtitle: *How Great Christians Struggled to Make Their Marriages Work*
- Helpful for its cumulative effect rather than any one of the particular biographies it sketches for you

A. Style:

1. Very readable
2. Written for the general public
3. Collection of short biographies of 25 well-known Christians,

focusing particularly on their marriages

4. Brief:

- a. Some chapters contain very little information about the couple
- b. Likely very little known concerning the wife of the individual in some cases

For example, this is most evident in the sketch of John Bunyan, the author of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, especially his first marriage. No one even knows the name of his first wife (although our author gives her one).

B. Content

1. Several exceedingly bad marriages including one surprising selection

Hannah Whitall Smith and her husband Robert Pearsall Smith.

Hannah was a universalist — a “Great Christian”?

She wrote *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life*

- A very bad book giving a distorted view of the Christian walk

2. The inclusion of bad marriages illustrates the truth that there have been good and bad marriages among men and women who have been looked up to as great Christian leaders
3. Brevity may disappoint if you have read full biographies
 - a. As first looks, interesting
 - b. As a collection with a focus on the marriages, helpful
4. Some helpful quotations or observations on marriage in the book, but not main focus

C. Cumulative effect

Let me sum up what I think you should take away from a reading of this book:

1. Every marriage is different – both women and men come to marriages with differing gifts, interests, and abilities.

2. Successful marriages manage to blend the strengths of the individuals into a working partnership.
3. Successful marriages overlook the faults of the spouses because of the *value* of the working partnership.
4. The most successful marriages follow God's divinely revealed pattern in the Bible by both partners putting their energy into the husband's calling from God. The wife enables her husband's success while often having her own distinct style, personality, ministry, and activity for God as well.
5. This does not look the same in every marriage, because every marriage is different.

Partnership is the main theme of this book. Without a full partnership, the problems of marriage are too much. The couples that succeed are the couples that fully commit themselves to one another, regardless of similarity or differences.

A marriage partnership doesn't mean that the wife moulds the husband into her image of what he should be or vice versa. What it means is that each individual takes what the other offers and works harmoniously with what has been given, denying self, in order to achieve a greater end.

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A few thoughts on marriage from the pages of this book:

From Catherine Booth, aggressive woman preacher, wife of William Booth:

Four Rules of Married Life, p. 79

1. Never to have any secrets from my husband
2. Never to have two purses
3. Talk out differences of opinion to secure harmony and don't pretend differences don't exist
4. Never to argue in front of the children

From Martin Luther, his views of marriage, pp. 163-164.

“To get a wife is easy enough, but to love her with constancy is difficult ... for the mere union of the flesh is not sufficient; there must be congeniality of tastes and character. And that congeniality does not come overnight.”

“Some marriages were motivated by mere lust but mere lust is felt even by fleas and lice. Love begins when we wish to serve others.”

“Of course, the Christian should love his wife. He is supposed to love his neighbour, and since his wife is his nearest neighbour, she should be his deepest love. And she should also be his dearest friend.”

“Nothing is more sweet than harmony in marriage, and nothing more distressing than dissension.”

From George Muller:

How Love Grows: by praying and working together, p. 245

1. Both of us, by God’s grace, had one object in life, and only one, to live for Christ
2. We had the blessing of having an abundance of work to do ... By God’s grace we gave ourselves to it; and this abundance of work greatly tended to the increase of our happiness. ... Our mornings never began with the uncertainty of how to spend the day, or what to do.
3. [As busy as we were, we] never allowed this to interfere with the care of our souls. Before we went to work, we had, as an habitual practice, our seasons for prayer and reading the Holy Scriptures.
4. Lastly, and most of all to be noticed, is this: we had for many years, whether twenty or thirty years of more I do not know, besides our seasons for private prayer and family prayer, also habitually our seasons for praying together.

Muller’s advice on finding a spouse, p. 247

1. Much waiting on God
2. A hearty purpose to be willing to be guided by Him
3. True godliness without a shadow of a doubt ... should be the first and absolutely most needful qualification
4. Suitableness. An educated man should not marry an uneducated woman or vice versa.

From William Carey, p. 319:

Qualifications for missionaries: “It is absolutely necessary for the wives of missionaries to be as hearty in the work as their husbands.”

## II. *Will Medicine Stop the Pain?*

A. Subtitle: *Finding God's healing for depression, anxiety, & other troubling emotions*

1. Written by two women who are certified by NANC, the National Association of Nouthetic Counselors
2. Elyse Fitzpatrick is a counselor of women and a writer of numerous books on counseling, one of which our ladies have studied, *Idols of the Heart*.
3. Laura Hendrickson is a medical doctor who formerly practiced psychiatry but is now a Biblical counselor. She struggled with depression herself, but found peace in Christ. She had a brother who also struggled with depression, but ended his own life because he would not turn to God.

B. Helpful, highly recommended, but note this!

1. Written by women for women... some guys might find that a bit disconcerting
2. I would advise our men to read this book anyway for the following reasons:
  - a. You will be helped in understanding some things your wife might experience because she is a woman.
  - b. Men can experience many of the same emotional/psychological problems as women. The approach of this book is biblical, the science of the book is universally applicable, and the philosophy of this book is one that both men and women need to adopt.
  - c. And finally: You're a man, you can take it.

C. Two Parts: Part One

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| Designed to help the reader understand what is going on when someone is suffering from 'inner pain' that is sometimes called depression or anxiety, or some other equally disturbing problems related to the inner man. |
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1. The first two chapters are excellent
  - a. In chapter 1, the authors address the question, "What's wrong with me?"

- 1) Huge debate in the world of counseling about what exactly is wrong when people experience inner turmoil
  - a) Materialists believe that people are just chemical compounds and all problems are related to the physical body
    - i) Bad feelings = sick brain
    - ii) Sick brain = find chemical cure
  - b) Biblical truth: people are body and soul
    - i) Bad feelings can be consequences of spiritual problems
    - ii) Spiritual problems centered on 'thought-habits'
    - iii) Ways you have gotten used to thinking
    - iv) Attitudes you have been in the habit of keeping
    - v) Unbiblical desires you have delighted in fulfilling, and so on
- 2) 'Out of the blue' depression
  - a) Long term patterns of faulty thinking while outwardly coping with problems
  - b) Can produce overwhelming feelings of depression, anxiety, or other mental and spiritual turmoil that seem utterly defeating

Gave an illustration of one woman who had a rebellious child, an indifferent husband, recently lost a parent, etc, but insisted that her depression was 'out of the blue' and a disease.

- 3) Balance
  - a) The authors do a good job of proving Biblically that the inner man (the soul, the spirit, the heart) is responsible for much of how you feel
  - b) They also acknowledge there is a physical component to these problems
  - c) If you try to deal with your feelings without dealing with your heart, failure will result

b. Chapter 2: “Will Medicine Help my Pain?”

- 1) Discusses how psychiatric medicines work
- 2) Discusses some serious problems with their use
  - a) Three major problems
    - i) “Poop Out”
    - ii) Tail Chasing
    - iii) Dependence
  - b) “Poop Out”: medications can and often do wear off – they lose their effectiveness
  - c) “Tail Chasing”:
    - i) Side effects can be mistaken for new problems
    - ii) New drugs are prescribed with new side effects
    - iii) New side effects then call for still newer drugs with other side effects
    - iv) And on and on it goes
  - d) “Dependence” means that individuals can become so dependent on the drugs they are taking that they have a hard time getting off them or reducing dosage
- 3) Authors are not against *all* use of psychiatric medicine
  - a) But very cautious about its use
  - b) Recommend dealing with heart issues first
  - c) They offer hope that the heart can change if we are faithful to follow Biblical guidelines for thinking and behaving.
2. The third and fourth chapters are intended to address the problem of suffering in a more general way
  - a. Some benefit in understanding suffering
  - b. But there is a problem with the underlying theology
    - 1) The concept that God’s primary objective in creation is getting more glory for himself is faulty
    - 2) At best, it is poorly expressed and at worst, it diminishes

the great attractiveness of a loving God who completely deals with human sin and its consequences without regard to any cost to Himself

This objection is relatively minor for the value of the book as a whole and should not put off anyone from reading the book.

D. Part Two:

1. Content:

- a. Addresses four specific areas of inner turmoil
- b. Concludes with a chapter directing the individual to learn to live and think for the glory of God

This section of the book is very helpful.

2. The four subjects addressed are:

- a. Depression
- b. Anxiety
- c. Out-of-Control Moods
- d. Cognitive-Perceptual Problems (Dementia, Schizophrenia, Psychosis, Head Injury, etc.)

3. Learning right responses

- a. Dealing with physical problems and disturbing emotions
  - 1) Physical problems may be especially evident in the area of Cognitive-Perceptual problems
  - 2) Physical problems can be related to the other areas as well
  - 3) However, we must learn that regardless of our problems [physical or spiritual], we are each individually responsible for our heart attitude and our behavioural responses
- b. Concluding chapter
  - 1) How to change heart problems
  - 2) Valuable teaching for anyone
    - a) Put off the old man with its habits and lusts
    - b) Put on the new man to walk in the light of the Lord

E. Additional material

1. Each subject covered briefly – not in depth
2. Excellent help in four appendices
  - a. The first appendix is a very good, balanced presentation of the Gospel
  - b. The second appendix is entitled “Understanding Medicine Dependence, Withdrawal, and Side Effects”

Further help about specific types of medicine reinforces some of the statements made earlier in the book.

- c. The third appendix directs you on how to talk to your doctor about any medication you may already be on.
  - d. The last appendix provides a bibliography of other helpful books on the specific topics mentioned
3. The book also contains many helpful charts and diagrams that illustrate the concepts the authors are discussing
4. One last comment: this book commits the sin of endnotes!
  - a. A pox on endnotes!

Endnotes put information that should be in footnotes at the end of the book. A pox on endnotes! May they be erased from the possibilities in the publisher’s arsenal!

- b. But be sure to check the endnotes

With only one exception, they provide excellent additional help on the points they are supporting.

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“In either case, our feelings aren’t dysfunctional or sick. Our feelings are doing just what they were designed by God to do. They’re showing us that we have a problem. *To feel better, we need to fix the problem, not just make the pain go away.*” [pp. 31-32]

“When we struggle with emotions, the only sure footing that we can find is in the Scripture. Ultimately it really doesn’t matter that our friends are encouraging us or that we’ve convinced ourselves that we are getting better. What really matters is that God is there, understanding, upholding, protecting, and pitying us.” [p. 75]

- “God uses suffering to draw us to Him. ...
- “Through suffering we learn to be more grateful for the suffering of God’s perfect Son. ...
- “Suffering is meant, in part, to motivate us to seek to change. ...
- “Our pain works to reveal our own misconceptions and sins and to lead us to repentance and truth. ...
- “Suffering humbles and enables us to comfort others who are suffering. ...” [pp. 110-111]

“Maybe you want to please God, but when it comes down to choosing between your convenience and God’s commands, you find that you don’t want to obey God badly enough to say no to your own desires. Or maybe your real goal is to become a nicer person so people will like you rather than to become more holy. If your desire is focused on you rather than God, then you will feel ashamed of your failure (*What will people think?*) rather than sorry before God for your sin. If you respond with shame rather than repentance, you will be tempted to despair over your failure rather than being strengthened in your resolve to please God the next time around.” [p. 158]

“Unlike the ‘five easy steps’ and ‘magic cures’ that the media bombards us with every day, the Bible teaches us that sanctification is a lifelong process that involves setting aside the old self and putting on the new.” [p. 187]