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5/2/08
Senior Thesis
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This I Promise You, and You, and You, and You: Recovering a Biblical View of
Love, Marriage, and Divorce

There had never been other men. It was hard to believe. She had given it some thought, once or twice, but it had never seemed worth it. Ian was so much better than anyone else, in her eyes. Sexier and smarter and kinder and more loving. Ian understood so well what she needed, and fulfilled so many needs. In the seven years they'd been married, she had lost track of most of her close women friends in New York, and hadn't replaced them with others in San Francisco. She didn't need women friends, a confidante, or a "best" friend. She had Ian. He was her best friend, her lover [. . .] And so what if now and then Ian had a "fling"? It didn't happen often, and he was discreet. It didn't bother her. Men did those things when they had to, when their wives were away (Steel 12).

Danielle Steel has written 57 Bestsellers and her novels have sold more than 570 million copies. Obviously, an immense number of people are drawn to Steel's vision of romantic love portrayed in her stories. Indeed, this selfish, flippant view of love and marriage has been accepted and eagerly welcomed into a vast majority of American homes - homes that, from recent studies, have about a 40% chance of keeping a marriage together (Pew Research Center). Could it be that the real end to the kind of marriage Danielle Steel describes is not happily ever after but divorce?

Christians, opposing Steel's view of love, offer their own definitions of love. Instead of focusing on the attractive attributes and contributions of the lovers, Christians center love on the solemn promise or plighting of the marriage vow. This vow is viewed by Christians as a contract made between two lovers in the presence of God. The French philosopher Denis De Rougemont captures the Christian view of love and marriage in his work *Love in the Western World*:

[. . .] in the humblest lives the plighting of a troth introduces the opportunity of making and of rising to the plane of the person – on condition, of course, that the pledge has not been for 'reasons' in the giving of which there is a reservation which will allow those reasons to be repudiated some day when they have ceased to appear 'reasonable'! The pledge exchanged in marriage is the very type of a *serious* act, because it is a pledge given once and for all. [. . .] A readiness to say 'No' to dazzling passion, when there is every earthly reason for saying 'Yes' – to say 'No' by virtue of an old promise, of human unreason, of a reason of faith, of a pledge given to God and underwritten by God (308).

De Rougemont asserts that marriage is a permanent vow made in the witness of God, a vow that should not be broken because of dazzling passion. The marriage vow is an unreasonable vow because it makes men act against their logic and human nature. It is also an eternal vow bound with God as its witness. Denis De Rougemont's words on marriage reflect the doctrine of the early church and her people who rejected divorce, viewing marriage as a lifelong commitment. By viewing love and marriage in this way, it can be assumed that Christians would possess an extremely low divorce rate. Today, however, this is not the case. When researchers compared divorce rates among non-Christians to divorce rates among Christians, they found that the two were the same (Pew Research Center). One research director, Meg Flammang, comments, "We would love to be able to report that Christians are living very distinct lives and impacting the

community, but [. . .] in the area of divorce rates they continue to be the same”

(Religioustolerance.org). If Christians and the church espouse such a lofty view of love, why are Christian marriages not more resilient? Because the foundations of Christian marriages have been infected with non-biblical assumptions about love and marriage; this has hastened the breakdown of Christian marriages. If the church desires to cure itself of the contagion and the devastating consequences of divorce, it must begin by recovering a biblical view of love and marriage.

The nature of the infectious disease entering Christian homes is prominently displayed in today’s culture. Just like Danielle Steel’s novel, books, songs, and movies all contain images which speak of today’s view of love. From these sources one can attribute three words to describe love: emotional, convenient, and transient.

Italian American singer Dean Martin perfectly captures the emotional characteristic of love in his classic song “That’s Amore” as he sings about “the world shining like you’ve had to much wine,” “stars making you drool like a pasta fazool,” and “dancing down the street with a cloud at your feet.” Today, love is defined by these divine, blissful feelings. What happens when the world ceases to shine and one no longer dances and drools? According to the world, he has fallen out of love. Upon this realization, the lover goes out in search for something that will regenerate his “love.” This leads to the convenient and transient characteristics of love. Once an object of love ceases to put his subject under a spell, the subject wakes up dissatisfied and deserts the object; it is no longer of any use or benefit to the subject. In this pattern, men jump from object to object extending their love only as long as they are pleased. This conception of love applies not only to “dating” but also to marriage. Just as the boyfriend leaves his girlfriend when she no longer excites the “love feelings” that she once did, husbands leave their wives, or vice

versa. If a man is not happy in his marriage, he gets a divorce. A few years later he might find another woman who makes him feel happy and marry her. What happens when she also does not fulfill his needs? He gets another divorce. The popular sitcom *Friends* uses this transient view of love and marriage to add comedy to its show as the character Ross is constantly laughed at for the multiple divorces he has experienced. The fact that Ross has married and divorced three times is not seen as serious or wrong; instead, it is accepted and used as a joke at his expense. Shockingly, some people are even beginning to define marriage in terms of divorce. For example, American novelist Norman Mailer defines marriage in four stages, "First there's the affair, then the marriage, then children and finally the fourth stage, without which you cannot know a woman, the divorce." The transitory nature of love and marriage arises from the assumption that divorce comes with the marriage package.

The transient and convenient view of love is vividly displayed in popular books, songs, and movies. With these beliefs, one can hardly be surprised that almost twenty-five percent of adults today have been divorced and that a new marriage has only a fifty percent chance of not ending in a divorce (U.S. Census Bureau). One may ask if the media is a direct cause for divorce. Is the media truly that influential? William Bennett answers this question when he writes,

If you doubt [the affect of the media on people's attitudes and behavior], simply ask yourself why companies were willing to pay \$2.5 million *per minute* to advertise during last year's Academy Awards. The answer is that giant corporations know that what is seen and heard can affect behavior, in his case the buying behavior of millions of people (31).

If one enters into the marriage contract with the belief that he can escape if he is ever dissatisfied or unhappy, then the marriage is doomed to fail from the start. Why stay in an unhappy marriage

if one can sign a few papers and be free to experience “love” again? This is natural and even expected; in fact, if he is no longer happy, the culture says that it is his right to leave. He owes it to himself to be happy.

What should be surprising is not only that almost forty percent of the American population is divorced, but that almost forty percent of Christian adults are divorced (Barna.org)! How do people who claim to reject divorce explain a divorce rate equal to those who accept it? If the divorce rates of the secular culture could be explained by examining the beliefs propagated by the media, perhaps the same is true of the church’s divorce rate. What is Christian media saying about love and marriage?

Christian love songs possess many of the same characteristics of popular love songs. They also sing about the feelings involved in falling in love. However, many Christian love songs not only include lines about falling in love, but trace love through the years expressing the belief that love and marriage are constant and permanent. Though sometimes considered melodramatic, this message of permanency is vital to a biblical marriage. Christian artist Mark Schultz recently released a single titled *Walking Her Home* that climbed to the top of the charts on Christian radio in America. In this song, the listener follows the relationship of a couple from when the adolescent boy walks his date home from a movie to the couple’s wedding day and finally to his holding her hand sixty years later as she passes away. Unlike contemporary artists who sing songs about breaking up, falling out of love, and one night stands, Christian artists think of love and marriage in terms of forever. This is what my generation needs to hear and understand.

In the realm of literature, there is little to praise about Christian love stories. The only positive aspect of most popular Christian literature is that it omits vulgar language and sexual

thoughts and scenes. However, the basic story and concept of falling in love and getting married is the same as popular romances. Granted, there may be a spiritual journey the characters are also traveling as they are falling for each other, and there might even be a few Scripture passages quoted, but usually none of these pertain to the love being shared between the characters. The love story in both genre are the same: boy meets girl, boy finds girl attractive, boy and girl spend time together, boy falls madly in love with girl, boy and girl overcome an obstacle to their love, boy asks girl to marry him, the end. The end? What happens next? Yes, fidelity and permanence are vowed by the man to his beloved, but this is also done in secular romance novels. Christian novels rarely trace love through marriage and the inevitable hardships that accompany it. They do not portray the importance of working through one's marriage even when the "love feelings" are not present. The picture they paint of love is just as falsely perfect and idyllic as a non-Christian novel. The only difference a Christian girl sees in these literary ideas of love is "no sex before marriage"! This phenomenon will be explored more in depth below.

It has been shown that popular Christian media is little different than secular media. However, it is necessary and encouraging to emphasize that there are many lesser-known Christian artists and writers who are staying true to the Christian view of love and marriage. Writer and poet Wendell Berry, for example, describes the marital relationship in his poem "The Country of Marriage." He writes that marriage is like

a forest in which there is a graceful clearing
and in that opening a house,
an orchard and garden,
comfortable shades, and flowers

red and yellow in the sun, a pattern
 made in the light for the light to return to.
 The forest is mostly dark, its ways
 to be made anew day after day, the dark
 richer than the light and more blessed,
 provided we stay brave
 enough to keep on going in (19-29).

These qualities of mystery, perseverance, and permanence are biblically sound and vital to the Christian's understanding of a biblical marriage. Beautiful, Christ-honoring work is being created, but regrettably most Christians in this generation are not reading it, hindering its positive message and effect on today's world. In fact, in respect to popular media, the world seems to be affecting the Christians more than the Christians are affecting the world. Could this be what is also happening to marriage and divorce? Before this question can be thoroughly answered, the Christian view of love must be examined as well.

Members of the Christian church define marriage as “an [eternal,] sacred bond between a man and a woman instituted by [. . .] and publicly entered into before God” (Kostenberger 85). When a couple separates and dissolves their marriage, they are said to have divorced. Since the church defines marriage as an eternal and sacred bond, it opposes the breaking of this bond by divorce. Where did this opposition originate?

As with any belief, the church arrives at its conclusions about divorce through the interpretation of Scripture. The church derives its view of divorce from two passages. Malachi 2:16 is the most commonly referenced because of its direct words by God on divorce: “For the Lord God of Israel says that He hates divorce, for it covers one's garment with violence [. . .]

Therefore take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously” (*New King James Version*). One would think that after this clear command, Christ’s followers would need no further instruction on divorce. However, there is always someone who questions a law by asking, “But what if (insert hypothetical situation here)...” For Jesus this “someone” was the Pharisees.

The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?” And He answered and said to them, “Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning ‘made them male and female,’ and said, “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 not man separate. They said to Him, “Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?” He said to them, “Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery” (*New King James Version, Matthew 19:3-10*).

David Instone-Brewer asserts that in this passage, Jesus is dealing specifically with the Pharisees who believed from a previous statement by Moses in Deuteronomy 24:1 that they were allowed to divorce for “any cause” (*Christianity Today* 26-29). In Matthew 19:3-10 Jesus rejects this interpretation and says that one can only divorce on the grounds of sexual immorality. Is this the only reason a Christian can get a divorce? If the whole counsel of Scripture is considered, one will find that the righteous grounds for a divorce expand to include more than just sexual immorality. Paul provides another cause in 1 Corinthians 7:10-11 when he writes that a married

Christian is released from her marriage vows if she is abandoned by an unbelieving husband.

Finally, Exodus 21:10-11 says that when a man takes a wife “he shall not diminish her food, her clothing, and her marriage rights. And if he does not do these three for her, then she shall go out free” (*New King James Version*). These three rights, Instone-Brewer asserts, became the basis of Jewish marriage vows and have been translated into the today’s vows as “love, honor, and keep.” From these three passages, Christians can conclude that the only biblical grounds for divorce are abandonment by an unbelieving spouse, sexual immorality, and the neglect of provisions of food, clothing, and love.

Although all Christians accept the basic definition of marriage proffered in the beginning, the interpretation among Christians on these divorce passages varies. The Roman Catholic Church interprets these passages to establish their view of marriage as a sacrament. In fact, the Catholic Church does not accept “divorce”. Once a couple has joined into a valid marriage, the only way for the marriage bond to be dissolved is by death. However, if the priest and his council determine the marriage invalid, the church can annul the “marriage”.

Protestant churches differ by saying that though God hates divorce, we live in a fallen world and this has created certain situations in which a believer can rightly divorce (which were previously mentioned above). Unfortunately, it seems that by this extension, biblical though it may be, Christians have relaxed the seriousness of divorce. Many Christians avoid referencing Malachi 2:16 in the fear that they will hurt people’s feelings and drive them away from the church. “Some Christians have persuaded themselves that a permissive attitude toward divorce is an enlightened accommodation to both human nature and modern life” (Bennett 167). And so, the gravity of divorce is overlooked. The Church should not ostracize or shame people who seek or have experienced divorce, but, rather, stand beside them with support and gracious care. But

that is not the same thing as being silent on the issue of divorce itself (Bennett 167). Divorce is a sin and is therefore forgivable through the cross of Jesus Christ. However, believers should recognize that unless the divorced person was abused, abandoned by an unbeliever, the victim of sexual immorality, or deprived of food, clothing, and love, their divorce is a sin that is hated by God. God also said He hates those who are lukewarm in their faith. Why is hatred taken more seriously than divorce? Christians have grown accustomed to divorce because the world surrounding them allows and accepts it. Members of the church no longer seem to realize the sobriety with which one should approach a broken marriage vow. It certainly is not an unforgivable sin, but it cannot be placed on the same level as the sin of a disobedient child who refuses to eat her vegetables. There is a reason God places divorce among the few things that he hates; and like God, his followers should approach a broken marriage vow made in the witness of God with a certain somber and serious nature.

With Christians internally struggling over God's commands on marriage and divorce, they become vulnerable to outside, unbiblical beliefs. The 1 Corinthians 13 view of love as patient, kind, humble, selfless, pure, and never-failing, is compromised and distorted by the worldly view of love that Christians subtly or obviously come face to face with everyday. In order for Christians to escape the influence of the world and strengthen their beliefs on love and marriage, they need to re-discover how God describes love. What are the attributes of love found in the Bible?

Unlike worldly love, Christ's love is not based solely upon emotion. In fact, Christian philosopher C.S. Lewis asserts that lovers who idolize the feelings created by love, Eros (the passionate sense of "being in love"), will quickly fall out of love.

The couple whose marriage will certainly be endangered by them, and possibly ruined, are those who have idolised Eros. They thought he had the power and truthfulness of a god. They expected that mere feeling would do for them, and permanently, all that was necessary. When this expectation is disappointed they throw the blame on Eros or, more usually, on their partners. In reality, however, Eros [. . .] makes the vows; it is we who must keep them. It is we who must labour to bring our daily life into even closer accordance with what the glimpses have revealed. We must do the works of Eros when Eros is not present (Lewis 114).

Lewis writes that couples who assume that feelings are going to keep their marriage together will be disappointed when their marriage ends up failing. Their marriage is not always going to be a pleasant ride; they will have to work. When they fall out of the state of “twitterpation,” as the wise owl in Disney’s *Bambi* would call it, they must continually work to revive and maintain the feelings of Eros. The only way this can be accomplished is by knocking Eros off his “throne” and transforming him through the love of Christ, or as Lewis refers to it – Charity (133). The feelings of Eros are not inherently evil, and they can benefit the marriage of a couple when approached with a biblical mindset. In fact, the very question of divorce in a husband or wife’s mind is usually implanted when he or she no longer feels or sees the affection and feelings of Eros. When couples do not work to keep the Eros spirit alive in their relationship, they become disenchanted and unhappy and begin wondering why they should continue in the marriage. This leads to an interesting and valid question for a couple. Why is a long unhappy marriage better than a short, happy one?

As a bride and groom stand at the front of the church, they stand in front of family and friends who witness the vows they exchange. This earthly audience, however, is not the only

witness to the wedding. The couple is vowing to “love, honor, and obey until death do them part” to each other “in the presence of God.” When God sees the marriage of two people He begins to see them differently. Once a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, the two become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one (Mark 10:7-8). Marriage is a covenant between a couple and God; in this light, one can easily understand why God hates divorce. In God’s eyes, divorce is a couple breaking their solemn promise to Him. In essence they are saying, “Yes, we promised you an eternal devotion, but it’s just not working out like we thought it would, so we are calling it quits.” God values the marriage covenant and expects the man and wife to be faithful to their vows.

This faithfulness God expects of His people is not a lofty idea which Christians have to imagine and create on their own. The pages of Scripture are covered with historical narratives portraying this faithfulness of God. In the book of Hosea, God communicates His relationship with Israel through the actual life of His prophet, Hosea. God commands Hosea to marry a prostitute named Gomer. After their marriage, Gomer does not honor her vow and abandons Hosea for other men. Does Hosea leave Gomer because of this? No, Hosea stays faithful to his covenant. He even continues to love Gomer through her sin against him. This biblical story is a picture of the faithful nature of God which His followers are supposed to emulate. Raymond C. Ortlund Jr. beautifully captures the faithfulness of God to Israel (as portrayed in Hosea): “Israel has forgotten Yahweh, but He is determined to make Himself loved once again. Amazingly, his response to her indifference is not further judgment but, in this case, the artful strategy of an ardent lover. He intends to allure her, rekindling the romance they enjoyed in their early years together” (67).

Christians should not only learn about this faithful, biblical love through reading Scripture, but also through the church. After all, is it not the responsibility of the church to instruct its sheep in the character of the Lord? If this is done effectively, its members should be able to incorporate the attributes of God and His love into every aspect of their life, especially in their relationships or marriage. Part of the responsibility Christ has given the church and her appointed leaders is to teach believers the nature of God and show them how to apply what they are learning about the character of God to their personal lives. Church leaders should portray commitment in their own lives and encourage it in the lives of fellow believers within their church.

However, Christian leaders cannot only instruct from the pulpits or through discipleship groups. Granted, these are helpful, but as we saw earlier, the culture's beliefs are affecting Christians' beliefs through literature, music, and television. Truly, as the Christian philosopher Ravi Zacharias asserted, "Satan does not enter through the front door of reason but through the backdoor of the imagination" (Zacharias). One of the most effective ways of passing on a belief or worldview is through the vehicle of storytelling. Even Christ employed this technique when He was teaching the disciples; He made many of his points in the form of parables. Christ did not limit His message to intimate biblical gatherings or Sunday morning proclamations; He taught His followers through miracles and stories. Christians should follow this example and surround their children with biblical stories of true marital love which may not end in "and they all lived happily ever after," but certainly do not end in divorce.

The distance between the biblical view of love and marriage mentioned above and where Christians and the church stand today may seem beyond repair, but this is not true. There are many steps the church can take in order to begin to recover a biblical view of love and marriage.

The church could start simply by ensuring that its services are conducted in a way that is not based on making its members feel good and comfortable, but teaching them the truth. One of these truths is that marriage is a sacred covenant made before and with God. This covenant cannot be easily pushed aside. Commitment is vital in a believer's life. If one decides to follow Jesus Christ, he commits to transforming his old sinful life into a life that glorifies his Savior. He commits to raising his family in accordance with Christ's teaching. He commits to abiding by the Ten Commandments offered in Exodus. He commits to twining his life purpose with that of the Great Commission. He commits to God in every aspect of his life. Commitment is essential to Christianity and is a vital to the definition of marriage: "an [eternal,] sacred bond between a man and a woman instituted by [. . .] and publicly entered into before God" (Kostenberger 85).

The leaders in a church such as pastors, deacons, elders, and staff should recognize marriage as a solemn commitment, and as representatives of the church they should practice commitment in their lives. Paul includes commitment in his description of a suitable church leader in 1 Timothy when he writes, "[. . .] The overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money." He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap (*New King James Version*, 3:1-13). Therefore, a church leader must commit to honoring his marriage, practicing the fruits of the Spirit, leading his family, growing in his relationship with the Lord, and maintaining a good reputation. These are the qualities one should look for in a potential or

existing church leader. In the context of marriage and divorce, a prominent leader in the church should be a man who has not had an unbiblical divorce, that is, a divorce based on something other than abuse, abandonment, or sexual sin. He must be, according to Scripture, a man who has been faithful and committed to his marriage and family.

Along with emphasizing commitment in church life and electing leaders of biblical character, the church can ensure that couples they marry know exactly what they are committing to and the permanence of their vows. Many churches recognize this need and offer pre-marital counseling as a mandatory step before performing a ceremony. This is a good start; it ensures that the couple knows the eternal and solemn nature of the marriage covenant before they enter into it. Although this is a step in the right direction, the church should not remove itself from the couple's relationship once they are married. The couple will face hardships in their relationships with God and with each other as their marriage continues and the church should be available for guidance and advice. If this is done, the church will be able to help couples work through their difficulties and scripturally dismiss any separation notions which have entered their minds. If the Christian couple decides against the biblical instruction of the church leaders and follows through with a divorce, the church should ask the couple to leave its assembly. This, of course, requires a recovering of church discipline. They have knowingly committed a sin hateful in the eyes of God and have rebelled against Him and the leaders He ordained. How is the church going to grow and minister to unbelievers if its believing members are knowingly committing sin against God?

Finally, as a result of the steps above, the church will begin to repair the damages of divorce by establishing a biblically sound view of love and marriage for the younger generations. Parents, who should already be instructing their children in Christ, will have the support of the

church and a spiritually healthy place for their children to continue in their education of Christ and His law. Youth groups and Sunday Schools need to be environments in which teenagers can develop biblical beliefs on love and marriage.

Earlier, the importance of storytelling was addressed. Many children are told stories before they are put to bed. When the child is a young boy, the tale usually consists of brave knights, ferocious dragons, exciting battles, and fair damsels in distress. For young girls, the story has slightly different details: castles, an evil witch, prince charming, white horses, and of course, happily ever after. What if, along with these magical tales, children were told true stories about couples in the Bible, such as Sarah and Abraham, Jacob and Rachel, or Ruth and Boaz? These Biblical stories may not seem as thrilling or romantic, but they give children a glimpse at a real-life relationship and marriage. Sarah and Abraham's relationship was far from perfect, and their marriage suffered many hard trials which they had to overcome; however, they were always committed to their relationship with each other and with God. Jacob did not fight a dragon to save Rachel, but he worked fourteen years to win her from her father. Ruth married Boaz not because he swept her off her feet and carried her off to an enchanted castle, but because she needed support and security for herself and her family. All of these romances partake in the even bigger meta-story of Christ and the church. These couples and their love point readers to the greatest love story of all – Christ redeeming and wooing His bride. This does not mean that children cannot be told magical fairytales or fanciful love stories; however, it is important to balance those stories with biblical ones and to differentiate fairytale from reality. Then, when they grow older, they will know how to approach love and marriage and be ready for biblical commitment.

The world is ready and waiting for the next generation with creative and subtle ways to convince it that love is an emotion that is only good when it is convenient and makes them happy, that divorce is a normal thing to experience and can even come to be expected. Marriage wasn't making them feel good any longer and it only had a fifty percent chance to begin with. The church needs to be prepared to face this cultural mindset without compromising its biblical beliefs on love and marriage. Here it may be asked, "Why must the church defend her position on love and marriage? Why should we spend our time recovering a biblical foundation of marriage?"

First, marriage provides man with companionship and support through which an image of Christ's relationship to the church is portrayed. In a marriage,

the woman completes or fills out the man's life, making him a larger person than he could have been alone, bringing into his frame of reference a new feminine dimension from which to view life that he could have known in no other way. Then, too, he also brings to his wife a masculine perspective that enlarges her life, making her a fuller, more complete person than she could have been apart from him. This marriage union by covenant solves the problem of loneliness not merely by filling a gap, but by overfilling it. More than mere presence is involved (Adams 16).

This unity contributes not only to their happiness, which as we have seen is not always present in marriage, but to the daily tasks God commands them. By fulfilling these earthly missions, they glorify Him and proclaim His message to those who are lost. As we saw in Hosea, the marriage relationship parallels to Christ's relationship with His people. If Christian marriages were grounded in the Bible, the couples in the church would be physically showing non-Christians, through the marital relationship, a picture of Christ's love. "A husband must always remember

that as a husband he is a living picture of the Lord Jesus. [. . .] The way the man treats his wife will determine whether he is speaking the truth about Christ or not. [. . .] This is because the Lord is a husband, and all husbands are therefore a representation of Him” (Wilson 44). And so, through marriage, believers not only grow in themselves and their relationship with Christ, but they also present the world with a visibly unique picture of marital love.

Secondly, marriage is important because it is beneficial to society. This is the reason why politicians endorse good “family values.” It has been proven that those who are married are happier, healthier individuals. It also creates a sense of obligation, honor, and meaning in life, all of which are characteristics necessary to the growth and stability of a good society. Also, a good, healthy marriage is essential to a child’s well being which preserves society in the future.

This leads to the final important role of marriage: the biblical instruction of children. Right now, one-fourth of U.S. Children will watch at least one parent divorce *twice* (Deal 33)! If a biblical view of marriage is not rebuilt, the next generation of Christians will grow up following their feelings instead of their biblical responsibilities (Adams 6). This is in addition to a variety of negative effects (drinking, drugs, and profligacy, to name a few) which research has proven rise with divorce.

As I look around at the state of my generation and then peer down the road it is traveling, I am struck with sadness and fear. Thankfully, I have had the privilege of living in a home which possesses a biblical view of marriage. My parents believe in the permanence of the marriage covenant and have taught me since I was young that divorce is against God’s plan and a sin against Him. Because of this instruction, I have an understanding of what a true, biblical marriage looks like and will be able to incorporate this knowledge not only in my future but also in my future children. Unfortunately, this is not the normal experience children have in a

majority of Christian homes. With the way things are, the vast majority of my generation is going to face marriage and children without a strong foundation of beliefs to guide them and their families. This lack of a secure basis will weaken society and the church. If we keep the status quo, my generation will be a population of uncommitted, emotionally driven men and women who have difficulty seeing Christ's love because it is not being portrayed in their lives or the lives of those around them.

The rebuilding of biblical marriage is important. I want my children to have examples other than my husband and me of biblical marriage and Christ-like love. I want my children and their children to consider marriage as “an [eternal,] sacred bond between a man and a woman instituted by [. . .] and publicly entered into before God” (Kostenberger 85), normal, because this is what they see in their parent's marriage, what they see in the marriages of the Christian couples involved in their lives, and what they see and are taught in the church. With this foundation, I will be confident that when my children go out into the world, they will be sure in their ways and know how to enter into a marriage and begin a family which will result in the glory of God and the expansion of his kingdom. And, as they live among unbelievers who jump from one marriage to the next in search for happiness and fulfillment, they will not be confused or persuaded. But they will know without a doubt that marriage can only result in a sense of completion and true enjoyment when it is performed as God designed it – permanent, sacred, intimate, mutual, and exclusive.

