

I am half Anglican. I love how God worked through the English Reformation and one of my heroes is Thomas Cranmer. He was far from a perfect man. In fact, he once recanted sola fide in light of Roman Catholic persecution. You should go read about it, but probably, Cranmer's greatest contribution to Christendom was the BCP. I feel a little schizo though because I also love the Puritans and if you know your history, they were no fans of the book of Common Prayer. They wanted completely *pure* worship and didn't want their liturgy imposed from Cranmer's BCP and the Church of England. / Still, much of what we do in Protestant church life is based upon Cranmer's biblical wisdom, including the language we use at funerals and weddings. Fn: my favorite thing about this manual written in the 1600s is it plans out the dates for Easter all the way out to the year 8400. Talk about the long view. Our country is in the shape its in in part due to our failure to think long-term.

This morning, I want us to consider the purposes of Christian marriage with the help of the BCP then the BFM, our confession. *First*, what is marriage? In the 1662 edition of the BCP (important to note because like most things, updates become downgrades – Lewis spoke of chronological snobbery – thinking that older material is inferior due to its age. The reality is the reverse is true: usually the older the better and the newer the weaker). The section on marriage, which is called “The Solemnization of Matrimony.” In the intro, it says that marriage is “an honorable estate, instituted by God in the time of man's innocency, signifying unto us the mystical union that is between Christ and his church, which holy estate Christ adorned and beautified with his presence and first miracle that he wrought in Cana of Galilee, and is commended of Saint Paul to be honorable among all men, and therefore is not by any to be enterprised, nor taken in hand, unadvisedly, lightly, or wantonly, to satisfy men's carnal lusts and appetites, like brute beasts that have no understanding, but reverently, discreetly, advisedly, soberly, and in the fear of God, duly considering the causes for which matrimony was ordained.”

It lists three purposes, all firmly rooted in Scripture: 1) The Procreation and Nurture of Children. “First, it was ordained for the procreation of children, to be brought up in the fear and nurture of the Lord, and to the praise of his holy Name.” 2) A Remedy Against Sin. “Secondly, it was ordained for a remedy against sin, and to avoid fornication; that such persons as have not the gift of continency might marry, and keep themselves undefiled members of Christ's body.” 3) Companionship. Thirdly, it was ordained for the mutual society, help, and comfort, that the one ought to have of the other, both in prosperity and adversity.”

BFM builds on BCP: What is marriage then four purposes: What is Marriage? “God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. It is composed of persons related to one another by marriage, blood, or adoption. Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime.” Marriage is *the* foundational institution of human society. Which is why everyone here should care for and advocate for marriage – even if you are single or called to celibacy. When a society denigrates marriage, it does so to its own demise. It is one man with one woman for a lifetime. Heb 13:4: marriage should be held in honor by all. / Used to be cornerstone (start with), now capstone (after career) / **Genesis 2:18-25**

Marriage is a *covenant* commitment. Not a contract. When a couple stands here and makes vows, what they are doing is making a promise – covenant commitment. A couple weeks ago, Liz and Corbin Kiedel got married right here. It was beautiful. They were both crying through most of the ceremony. They were glowing. The heat was tangible. All in this room knew they loved each other. But that's not what that ceremony was about. Those vows were not expressions of present love. That's not at issue. Vows are covenantal commitments of future

love, to use the language of the BCP: “Wilt thou love her, comfort her honour and keep her in sickness and in health; and, forsaking all others, keep thee only unto her, so long as ye both shall live?”

As Christians, we know how to define love. 1 John 3:16 By *this* we know what love is: Jesus laid down his life for us. Love is defined by Calvary. Love takes blood, sweat, and tears. I wasn’t raised in a Christian home, but I had a distant cousin who was a strong Christian. A Calvinist, even. And he said “Blake, there will be days you wake up and don’t like Alicia. And you are still called to love her.” Being engaged, young, and dumb, I said yes sir, but thought to myself, maybe for you and Kim but not me and Alicia. Never.

My cousin knew that biblical love means more than feelings. Feelings make terrible leaders but decent followers. No relationship can last on emotion. Listen to CSL: “Now no feeling can be relied on to last in its full intensity, or even to last at all. Knowledge can last, principles can last, habits can last; but feelings come and go. And in fact, whatever people say, the state called ‘being in love’ usually does not last. If the old fairy-tale ending ‘They lived happily ever after’ is taken to mean ‘They felt for the next fifty years exactly as they felt the day before they were married’, then it says what probably never was nor ever would be true, and would be highly undesirable if it were. Who could bear to live in that excitement for even five years? What would become of your work, your appetite, your sleep, your friendships? But, of course, ceasing to be ‘in love’ need not mean ceasing to love. Love in this second sense – love as distinct from ‘being in love’ – is not merely a feeling. It is a deep unity, maintained by the will and deliberately strengthened by habit; reinforced by (in Christian marriages) the grace which both partners ask, and receive, from God. They can have this love for each other even at those moments when they do not like each other; as you love yourself even when you do not like yourself. They can retain this love even when each would easily, if they allowed themselves, be ‘in love’ with someone else. ‘Being in love; first moved them to promise fidelity: this quieter love enables them to keep the promise. It is on this love that the engine of marriage is run: being in love was the explosion that started it. . . . People get from books the idea that if you have married the right person you may expect to go on ‘being in love’ forever. As a result, when they find they are not, they think this proves they have made a mistake and are entitled to a change – not realizing that, when they have changed, the glamour will presently go out of the new love just as it went out of the old one. In this department of life, as in every other, thrills come at the beginning and do not last.”<sup>1</sup>

A covenantal commitment, not based on the mere feeling that modern culture calls love. Bonhoeffer would tell newlyweds: “It is not your love that sustains the marriage, but from now on, the marriage that sustains your love.” Love is a commitment. It is a verb. It is more than feelings. Lewis Smedes: are flickering flames that fade after every fitful stimulus. As we know all too well in Abilene, faulty foundations lead to problems and feelings are not nearly a sturdy enough thing to hold marriage up.

This is why for Christians, there are only two reasons a Christian can divorce: abandonment by an unbeliever and sexual immorality. Divorce is the curse that keeps on cursing. And the main reason people divorce today is what is often called “falling out of love.” Irreconcilable differences. But biblically, there is no falling out of love. That’s not a thing. But there is falling out of repentance. Falling out of sacrifice. Falling out of taking up your cross. One man, one woman, for a lifetime in a covenant commitment.

Dearly beloved, if that is what marriage is, how should we respond? Hold a high view of marriage, and teach, guard, and defend the traditional view of marriage. Today, that means being clearly, humbly, but firmly opposed to LGBTQ++++ ideology. Destructive to men, to women, to children, to civilization.

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<sup>1</sup> C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (), 93-

In the late 60's, feminist Kate Millett, who wrote *Sexual Politics* and was known as the female Marx, led 12 women in feminist psychotherapist Lila Karp's apartment in the following chant: Why are we here today? To make revolution. What kind of revolution? The Cultural Revolution. And how do we make Cultural Revolution? By destroying the American family! How do we destroy the family? By destroying the American Patriarch. And how do we destroy the American Patriarch? By taking away his power! How do we do that? By destroying monogamy! How can we destroy monogamy? By promoting promiscuity, eroticism, prostitution, abortion, and homosexuality."<sup>2</sup> Feminism is poison to marriage and to society.

The BFM goes on to list the first of 4 purposes: "It is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church and to provide for the man and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel of sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race." Let's look at these 4 purposes of Christian marriage:

**I. Christ and the Church.** In the purpose of God, marriage uniquely reveals the union between Christ and his church. **Eph 5:22-32**. Simply incredible. Before God created, he had Christ and the church in mind when he created marriage. Get the order right. It is not like he ordained marriage and then needed to come up with something: you know, it's like the sun and the moon, birds and bees, dew and the rain, now how about Christ and the church. No. He had Christ and the church in mind before he created marriage. That is how significant holy matrimony is. It doesn't get any higher than Christ and his church.

Two implications: 1st, this is why the enemy hates healthy marriages. They remind him of the gospel, of Christ and the church. 2nd, this means is your marriage preaches a gospel. It may be a heretical gospel or a true one, but it preaches.

How? Submission and headship, love and respect. BFM: "The husband and wife are of equal worth before God, since both are created in God's image. The marriage relationship models the way God relates to His people. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ. She, being in the image of God as is her husband and thus equal to him, has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation."

Marriages display Christ and the church as wives submit to their husbands – note: not women submit to men but wives submitting to their own husbands. Submission is the active cooperation of a wife with her husband's leadership. [If you know football, consider the head coach and offensive coordinator]

Eph 5:33 respect. Respect is showing appreciative honor. Tilly Dillehay in *Dear Hemlock*: "We must do everything in our power to prevent her finding out a standard fact about the male human: he will usually slouch to meet a woman's disapproval and grow to meet her praise. Men simply don't respond to criticism the way women believe they will. It's the old Aesop's fable about the sun and the wind in a contest to remove a man's coat. Our best marriages occur when a woman is constantly trying the wind's method, blowing as cold and hard as she can. Husbands universally respond by pulling their coats tighter around them. (in the fable, the sun shines warmly on the man's face so that he removes the coat voluntarily. It is a dangerous secret, really)."<sup>3</sup>

Men need respect and women need love. Husbands are called to love, but not just fuzzy feelings or even romance, but Calvary-like love. Self-giving love. Sacrificial love. As Christ loved the church.

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<sup>2</sup> Gress, 77. <https://www.frontpagemag.com/marxist-feminisms-ruined-lives-mallory-millett/>

<sup>3</sup> Tilly Dillehay, *Dear Hemlock*, 12.

**II. Companionship.** Marriage provides “the framework for intimate companionship.” Marriage is built on friendship. It provides the closest of relationships. Fully known and fully loved. Knowing the worst in each other, but completely committed. Ride or die. Song of Solomon 5:16 this is my lover this is my friend.

Eccles 4:9-11: “Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone?” Prov 31 an excellent wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels. Prov 18:22 he who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the Lord. We have a whole book about it: We have a whole book about marital love: the Song of Solomon: He brought me to the banqueting house and his banner over me was love.

How do we pursue marital companionship? Two ways: lifelong pursuit and lifelong repentance. Marriage should be a lifelong pursuit of one another. Part of keeping intimate companionship is dating all your life. And intentionally dating with meaningful conversation. Parents, talk about the marriage not just the kids. Husbands, lead out with good questions. Such as: How am I leading? How did you best feel loved this week? What does next week look like for us? How would you best feel loved in the coming week? How can I serve/help next week? How can I pray for you this week? How would you like me to pursue you in intimacy this week?

Stay in fellowship. Healthy marriages are not conflict-free relationships but full of repentance and forgiveness. Lifelong pursuit and lifelong repentance. Relationships are ruptured by rebellion so will need regular reconciliation. Conflict doesn’t mean something is wrong, but that you are married. The goal is to stay in fellowship, to keep short accounts.

You are on the same team. “Researches studying couples’ arguments have found that those who use ‘we words’ when they fight are apt to have less cardiovascular arousal, fewer negative emotions, and higher marital satisfaction than those who use ‘me/you words’.”<sup>4</sup>

Remember the 4 G’s of conflict resolution from Ken Sande? 1. Glorify God – In a fight, you want to honor God with the words you use, with the tone of voice. / 2. Get the Log out - Remember you are first a sinner, second sinned against. So get the log out of your eye before you point out your spouse’s splinter. Confess your sin. And be specific. No, “I am sorry.” But “I sinned against God and you by disrespecting you. Will you forgive me?” Specific confession. We can own our sin because Christ has paid for it! Confess forgive reconcile. Ingredients for a gospel-centered marriage. Men, lead out in this. You are the Chief Repenter. No blameshifting like Adam. 3. Gently restore Gal 6:1 - “Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.” / 4. Go and be reconciled.

Sande also lays out 4 promises of forgiveness: 1) “I will not dwell on this incident.” 2) “I will not bring up this incident again and use it against you.” 3) “I will not talk to others about this incident.” 4) “I will not let this incident stand between us or hinder our personal relationship.”

Married couples, if you are struggling, get help. You need outside voices, perspectives, accountability, and love. And get help early, not after 6 years of a cold home. For all of us, view marriage as part of your discipleship. Luther called it the school of sanctification. Taking up your cross and following Jesus.

Marriage is a means of growth. Tripp writes, Marriage “is meant to be a tool in God’s hands to expose your heart and to drive you to the end of yourself. Marriage is meant to expose your self-focus and self-reliance. It is meant to convince you that you are needier than you thought you were and to encourage you that God’s grace

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<sup>4</sup> Build the Life you Want, 143.

has more power to transform than you thought it did. Marriage is meant to teach you how to give, love, serve, forgive, support, encourage, and wait.”<sup>5</sup> / Companionship

**III. Sex** Marriage between one man and one woman provides “the channel of sexual expression according to biblical standards.” The BFM puts it more positively. Remember, the BCP: “it was ordained for a remedy against sin, and to avoid fornication.” Maybe not the most romantic purpose but vitally important. **1 Cor 7:2-5**. That word for “fornication” is the Greek word “*porneia*.” It refers to a variety of sexual sins.

God cares deeply about our purity. He warns and commands about it all over the Bible. **1 Cor 6:15-20, Eph 5:3-7, 1 Thess 4:3-7**. / One of the means God give to help us avoid sexual immorality is marriage. / And in marriage, you must have high walls. Adultery is treacherous. Read Prov 5, 7. It tears people apart and the biggest victims are the children.

How do we apply this point? If married, have regular sex. Easiest sermon application you’ll hear all year. Pursue one another with intimacy. Double your frequency. If you take a deep dive on all kinds of studies and average the advice out, it typically averages 3x a week. Talk about it 3x more than you currently are. David Ayers (Grove City) shows that “married people who have more sex are much more likely to say their marriage is very happy, as seen in the General Social Survey. The Survey of Marital Generosity found that married parents with ‘above-average levels of sexual satisfaction’ were much more likely to be happy in their marriages and much less likely to be prone to separation or divorce. Thus ‘sexual satisfaction emerges as one of the top five predictors of marital quality and stability for both mothers and fathers in today’s families’.”<sup>6</sup>

As you serve each other in this way, you weakens the devil’s power: “so that Satan may not tempt you.” You build oneness and dependence on one another. Marriage should become an oasis from temptation and a garden where God’s good gift is cultivated.

**IV. Children** It is interesting that the BCP *starts* here in 1662, but the BFM *ends* here in the year 2000. Marriage provides “the means for procreation of the human race.” Marriage is for kids. The first command of the Bible is get married and have kids. Genesis 1:28: “And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” Multiply and have dominion. Make babies make culture.

This is truly a miracle. God invites husband and wife to participate in the ongoing miracle of God’s creation. I told the kids the other day, isn’t it weird, that without Momma and I’s love, you would not exist. Wild thought! And not only that, the way to get there is the intermingling of bodies and souls. What a gift. Just marvel for a moment: two bodies come together, in God’s will of two people completely devoted to the good of one another, the highest moment of pleasure one can conceive, a seed is planted, when a child is conceived a new body and soul come into being sharing the equal DNA from each parent. There is encoded in the embryo the XY or XX chromosomes, that will chart out a particular path. Lord-willing, this child will someday pass on that genetic heritage to yet another generation.

Before the 1960’s, sex and children went together. I think we often fail to realize how significantly the sexual revolution had changed our world – obviously for the worse. / Sex is for marriage and marriage is for children. Mal 2:15-16: “Didn’t the LORD make you one with your wife? In body and spirit you are his. And what does he want? Godly children from your union. So guard your heart; remain loyal to the wife of your youth. ‘For I hate

<sup>5</sup> Paul David Tripp, *What Did You Expect?*, 251.

<sup>6</sup> Ayers, 76.

divorce!’ says the LORD, the God of Israel. ‘To divorce your wife is to overwhelm her with cruelty,’ says the LORD of Heaven’s Armies. ‘So guard your heart; do not be unfaithful to your wife.’”

Be pro-children, and seek to have children, but not just have kids, but discipline, disciple, and educate them. Make babies make culture. BFM: “Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord. Parents are to demonstrate to their children God’s pattern for marriage. Parents are to teach their children spiritual and moral values and to lead them, through consistent lifestyle example and loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth. Children are to honor and obey their parents.”

How do you train them up? Most basically, attend. Here is how our membership covenant puts it, “We will not forsake the gathering of ourselves together, but will prioritize corporate worship, treasuring our church’s weekly opportunities to sing the Word, pray the Word, hear the Word, and see the Word displayed in the ordinances.” Have your kids here: for S.S., corporate worship, corporate prayer, and Midweek. We have an amazing team that will supplement what you are doing. You are the primary disciple-makers of your kids, but you want them hearing the same thing from other godly voices. The church is here for just that. / Next week for S.S., I’ll be teaching on kids and parenting in the pew.

Practice family worship Eph 6:4: “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” The *paideia* of the Lord, most basically meaning enculturation in the Christian worldview. Provide them with a Christian education. This can look different ways, but is not optional.<sup>7</sup> BFM article on education: “Christianity is the faith of enlightenment and intelligence. In Jesus Christ abide all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. All sound learning is, therefore, a part of our Christian heritage. The new birth opens all human faculties and creates a thirst for knowledge. Moreover, the cause of education in the Kingdom of Christ is co-ordinate with the causes of missions and general benevolence, and should receive along with these the liberal support of the churches. An adequate system of Christian education is necessary to a complete spiritual program for Christ’s people.”

Deut 6:7-9: “You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”

Parents are the primary disciple-makers of their children. Pray for God to grab their hearts. Pack in the kindlin. Make ready for the fire and pray for the Spirit to light em up. We can’t save our kids but we can load in the flammable material.

Listen to Martin Luther: “Children are the sweetest fruits of marriage. They tie and strengthen the bonds of love. The greatest good in married life, that which makes all suffering and labor worthwhile, is that God grants offspring and commands that they be brought up to worship and serve Him. In all the world, this is the noblest and most precious work because to God there can be nothing dearer than the salvation of souls. This, at least, all married people should know: They can do no better work and do nothing more valuable either for God, for Christendom, for all the world, for themselves, and for their children than to bring them up well.”<sup>8</sup>

Young marrieds, if the Lord allows, have a lot of kids. Round up. You won’t regret it in the long run, though later in life many regret not having had more. / Luther puts it all together well. He says, “The ultimate purpose [of marriage] is to obey God, to find aid and counsel against sin; to call upon God; to seek, love, and educate children for the glory of God; to live with one’s wife in the fear of God and to bear the cross.”

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<sup>7</sup> “What can theistic Sunday School, meeting for an hour once a week, due to stem the tide of a five day program of humanistic teaching?” -Charles Potter, founder of Humanist Society of New York, along with John Dewey, the father of progressive education.

<sup>8</sup> A Sermon on the Estate of Marriage (1519).

