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Book Critique: You and me Forever: Marriage in Light of Eternity

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Book Critique

Marriage is a vital societal institution that is valued highly, by many, throughout the world. According to a survey released by the Census Bureau, in 2020, in the U.S., 133.3 million adults older than 15 years old were reported to be married. This estimate does not include 4.5 million married couples who are separated. Marriage has different meanings across cultures. Notably, these meanings are deeply rooted in societal, religious, and traditional norms. Yet, regardless of how individuals, society, and religion purview marriage, married and engaged couples tend to quest for enlightenment on how to face or mend problems in their marriages. Numerous books have been written on marriage. “You and me forever: Marriage in Light of Eternity,” a Christian book written by the renowned best-selling Christian author and speaker Francis Chan and his wife, Lisa Chan, atypically address the questions and concerns that couples tend to be bombarded with, in the pursuit for a healthy marriage.

Summary

You and me Forever: Marriage in Light of Eternity is a fascinating and thought-provoking book. The authors attune to scriptural nuances and personal anecdotes or testimonies to debate the topics presented in the book. Unequivocally, the authors do not address the problems of marriage as many would expect. Instead, they utilize scriptures to target marital concerns such as spousal fights, love, lasting marriage, and other related topics.

A relationship with God is the book’s central theme. According to the authors, if God is not the first or at the center of one’s life, aspiring to a great or successful marriage is nearly improbable. When Jesus is in one’s heart, it will reflect in one’s marital union. Joy, patience, peace, love, kindness, and gentleness are fruits given by God’s Holy Spirit that aid in the maintenance of an ultimate relationship with one’s spouse and others. Undoubtedly, as

pinpointed by the authors, a Christ-centered marriage is not devoid of quarrels or misunderstanding; however, when they arise, one must hang firmly on God's word and the Holy Spirit's directives to amply, solve, or tackle the issue. The authors attest that humility is the core of a prosperous marriage. Jesus' life is given as a point of reference to demonstrate the work of humility. Thus, one can prevent an argument from escalating by imitating Christ. For, reconciliation would be sought, not winning the fight. In addition, the authors mention repentance and self-denial as keys to a thriving marriage.

The chief purpose of the book is to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Many may be puzzled by this fiery question, what connection does the gospel have with marriage? The authors address this question unapologetically with biblical annotations or verses. The marriage mainly portrayed in the book is the union of Jesus Christ with his brides, believers. As Christ-followers, believers must follow in his footsteps. The authors highlight that marriage symbolizes God's image to the world. God is invisible; however, its fruits can be seen in believers. As annotated by the authors, in the book of Ephesians 5, God commands wives to submit to their husbands and husbands to equally demonstrate the love God has for believers to their wives. Jesus was maltreated and crucified for the sins of the world. Indeed, this is not an uncomplicated task, as remarked the authors.

Moreover, the authors encourage us, the readers, to place God before all. The book emphasizes that, in our lives, God must be placed first, and nothing should be placed sequentially second or third after him. Thus, God must be far above anything in one's life. Marriage is an essential part of one's life, stated the authors. However, a relationship with God is more valuable. One of the missions allotted to believers is to share the Gospel of Jesus. This task is not volunteer work; it is a command from God. The authors stressed that Christians must prioritize

seeking God's kingdom and His righteousness and making discipleships throughout their walk with Christ. Making discipleship includes one's children, stated the authors, Francis and Lisa Chan. Parents must raise their children to love God and to be his follower.

Critical Interaction

Unsurprisingly, in the book, the arguments Francis and his wife, Lisa Chan, present on marriage are from a Christian perspective. Many may be stunned by the book's contents as it takes an unconventional route on the topic of marriage. One could have anticipated the book to discuss a marriage that lasts forever; however, it does not. According to the authors, "Marriage in Light of Eternity" signifies making all the necessary preparations to inherit eternal life. To obtain eternal life, one must accept Jesus Christ as their savior and live a sanctified life as God's word, the bible, demands. At the end of each chapter, the authors encourage the readers to take action by completing a self-examining questionnaire. Taking action infers to act according to the leading of the Holy Spirit. It may be a call to repentance, baptism, and reconciliation with God.

Further, the authors' intrinsic goal is to catapult the readers to envisage marriage through a different lens. Presumably, many, especially unbelievers and atheists, would evade a book that is bluntly centered on God. The book's title, nonetheless, may elevate one curiosity to read a few pages. The authors establish that most of the books written on marital life focus on obtaining happiness in marriage. However, this highly sought happiness is temporary. Seeking eternal happiness, nevertheless, is ideal. It entails loving your spouse endlessly. While in heaven, there will not be married couples, but angels Francis and Lisa Chan encourage couples to demonstrate their love by serving God, for, in the end, they will worship God happily, together in heaven.

Strengths and Weaknesses

All written books and literary works contain areas that are often admired and criticized. *You and Me Forever: Marriage in Light of Eternity* has various strengths worth being cited. The book is straightforward. Apart from the title, which may be deceptive, the authors, throughout the book, maintain their stances on marriage, which is unique. From the first chapter, the writers' intention is revealed. Hence, it is the readers' choice to read the subsequent chapters. A believer, however, may benefit wholly from this book. It contains elements aiming at aiding Christ's followers, strengthening and perfecting their relationship with him.

The writing style is another arena of the book that merits being applauded. The authors' writing technique is analogous throughout the book. Aside from being informative and inspirational, the writing style is simple and can be comprehended by most individuals. The tone is subtly serious. The points throughout the book are made from both male and female viewpoints, which is admirable as either sex may find it relatable.

One downside prevalent in the book stemmed from a shortage of information on some of the sub-topics debated. For instance, an unbeliever may want to know more about the Holy Spirit. The authors utilized John 16:7 to highlight God's Holy Spirit; however, they lack mentioning vital attributes of the Holy Spirit, who he is (The bible refers to the Holy Spirit as a person), and how one can receive this divine person in one's mortal body.

Additional Writing on this Subject

Innumerable books, articles, and poetic works are written on marriage. One highly recommended guidance book on marriage is John Gottman and Nan Silver's book, "The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work." Unlike *You and me Forever: Marriage in Light of Eternity*, *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work* is a marriage counseling book that comprises precepts to help couples solve their marital concerns. The arguments presented in the

book are based on a secular standpoint. The authors are experts on matrimonial issues, and their stances on marriage are derived from evidence-based research. As emphasized in the book title, the authors outlined seven principles that can lead to a blissful or happy marriage when implemented. Similar to Francis and Lisa Chan's book, questionnaires and activities are provided to help increase the readers' knowledge on the subjects discussed. The authors assure that they can foretell a marriage demise when couples fail to apply their principles correctly.

Application on the Field of Counseling

Given that many Christians are constantly seeking counseling to remedy concerns in their matrimony, the material discussed on *You and me Forever: Marriage in Light of Eternity* can be beneficial at aiding them in confronting their issues. Not all Christians are open to secular counseling. Christian counselors can challenge their clients who overtly profess their Christian faith and quest for Christian counseling to tackle the problem in their marriage as directed by Francis and Lisa Chan, which entails shifting their focus on God instead of their marriage. According to the authors, all will fall in their rightful place when God is placed first in a believer's life.

Personally, as a Christian, I benefit greatly from Francis and Lisa Chan's book. When I purchased the book, I was unaware of the authors' view on the subject of marriage. Like many readers, I expected the book to be a practical manual on marriage; however, the book challenged me to regard marriage from another loop, which I find intriguing. Like me, I believe other Christians can benefit from the book immensely. Moreover, the exercises and activities provided throughout the book are incredibly beneficial in helping one practicing the material shared.

In conclusion, *You and me Forever: Marriage in Light of Eternity* is a terrific book. It is scriptural-based. While many books written on marriage provide practical counsels for obtaining

a healthy marriage, *You and me Forever Marriage in Light of Eternity* does not. Instead, the book catapults the readers to focus on God and live as his words command. Though the book has many strengths, it is not exempted from error. Aside from personal use, the book can be utilized as a study guide in marriage and family counseling. Overall, the book is can be an excellent asset for Christians who desire to strengthen or rekindle their relationship with God.

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