

***A Lasting Promise: Through Lense of a Young Girl Who Is Fighting For Marriages and  
Families***

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Who knew that stepping into my first year of my MFT program I would read so many profound books that not only made me think about real application towards my own personal relationship, but also led me to start thinking of applications that I'll apply in my own profession and what that will look like. There's plenty of books that have made me think about this on some level, however, *A Lasting Promise* by Scott Stanley had me thinking of ways to implement their content on my own life within every single page. Unfortunately, I cannot write about every single page, but I do have five points that stood out the most to me in this resource and will be moving forward with me in my personal and professional life. As soon as I opened the first chapter, the authors of this book came at my heart spiritually when laying down what marriage is supposed to look like and what it means according to God by saying, "Divorce is not God's perfect plan, because marriage is fundamentally about two people mysteriously coming and remaining one for the rest of their lives. Put another way, God's design for marriage is that it be a covenant of spiritual unity, in which the souls and hearts of a man and women are joined before Him into a 'threefold cord' providing direction and meaning in the bond of love" (Stanley, S., Trathen, D., McCain, S., & Bryan, M. 2014, p.5). When providing any kind of premarital counseling to a believing couple, this will be the basic foundation I will lay down about what entering into a marriage is supposed to look like. This is also a belief that I think my future husband and I should continue to sit on and pray on because there's no better way to be sanctified by God than marriage. Many couples understand that marriage is a big deal, but I don't think that there's much talk about how special and sacred marriage is because they are entering into a covenant relationship with God where they become one (basically). The authors talk about this oneness all throughout the rest of the first chapter and I would like to help my relationship and

other couples I work with understand what God means when he speaks of marriage being sanctified, a covenant, and one.

In chapter four the authors talked about sliding and not deciding, which is a new concept for me and I very much enjoyed learning about this idea. It's so important for couples to become a unit who can decide things, especially big decisions because certain conversations need to happen. Many couples just slide into major decisions and then wonder why they have so many problems months down the road. What really stood out to me in this chapter was on page 52, where it said, "Strive to thoughtfully decide about the things that matter. When you're taking a journey, it's necessary to make a clear decision about where you want to end up, instead of just driving around, hoping to eventually end up somewhere you like"(Stanley, S., Trathen, D., McCain, S., & Bryan, M. 2014,). Professionally, I have seen too many couples become comfortable with sliding instead of deciding on important topics that come up in their relationship. Many people wonder why numerous studies show that couples who move in together before getting married end up in divorce more often than couples who wait until marriage to move in together. When looking at these statistics in the lens of how important deciding versus sliding is, then those numbers make sense and this is why I want to help the couples I work with become decision makers in their relationship. Moving in with a partner is a huge decision that should not be made lightly and what usually happens is slowly the other partner decides to spend everyday over the other's house and eventually they start living together. They missed too many important conversations that should have happened before moving in. I have even seen couples who slide into marriage and because they have been dating for "so long" or are "getting to that age" there is no proposal or big decision making talk and they just decide they should get married. I also plan to implement this in my own life as well because I am dating

and am not married yet, there's lots of decisions in the future I plan to make with my significant other and not just slide aimlessly into certain milestones or important topics that should be discussed thoroughly.

Learning how to handle problems well is a tool that every couple can use in their box of being a functional and healthy couple and that's exactly what chapter six of this book talks about. They go through simple ways to handle small problems and ways to handle problems that are of a more serious stature. To handle problems well the authors names three steps to follow in order: problem discussion, prayer, and problem solving. From problem solving there are four sub steps that include: agenda setting, brainstorming, agreement, and follow up(Stanley, S., Trathen, D., McCain, S., & Bryan, M. 2014, pp.96-99). I believe many couples avoid high conflict conversations because they are afraid that it will turn into an argument or result in someone being upset or unhappy. This happens because most couples approach problems with no structure and so the conversation might go in circles or become controlled by one person. In the model discussed in this chapter, there is structure throughout every step to ensure that in the end, the couples can find an agreement and walk away knowing no one attacked each other or hurt one another deeply from unnecessarily harsh words. In my future professional life, I will want to first work with couples on this once they learn how to communicate through the listener-speaker technique with smaller issues because this will prove useful when trying to feel understood and heard during the problem discussion phase. I love this model because big problems seem scary and out of reach and what better way to handle something too big than to give it to God? I see couples praying before a discussion or after one, but how many couples actually sit after hearing one another's point of views and pray for clarity and trust before proceeding to the actual problem solving. When it comes to practical application, I enjoy this resource the most because I

can apply every single one of my favorite five points to my personal and professional life. As someone who doesn't have real clients, yet it's extremely helpful to 'practice' on my own life and learn things like how to set a proper agenda and brainstorm any crazy idea.

Many people keep friends for their whole life, but struggle to keep a significant other in their life forever and chapter eleven did a fantastic job at explaining why that happens. Most couples end up reaching a certain point in their relationship where it turns into less going out and having fun and only discussing problems and working through difficult parts of life or trying to change one another. This leads to them finding themselves extremely unhappy most of the time when interacting with one another. I never realized this before reading, but most couples really do end up falling in that exact rut where they talk about literally nothing except their troubles or problems between them. Having friends is so fun because you never talk about hardships between each other or expect anything from each other that's super emotionally deep. Chapter eleven explains how to achieve those friendship moments in a marriage by saying, "In marriage, you have to do both - but you have to work at the positive stuff to keep it alive. Make it safe to connect as teammates, dealing with the icky stuff of life"(Stanley, S., Trathen, D., McCain, S., & Bryan, M. 2014, p.196). In my personal life, I want to make sure that I do not fall into this rut with my partner and that we can continue to enjoy each other's presence with the absence of stressful life situations. Continuing to build up and work at a friendship bond in a marriage is important because it creates positivity and happiness despite hardships that will come forth. I think I will pretty much stop a session to have a conversation and assign homework if I notice a couple I am working with that only focuses on the troubles between them and has no kind of fun with one another. It's quite essential for couples to start doing that right away again if they have

stopped or don't do it at all because counseling a couple who doesn't enjoy each other's company is going to be hard work for all parties in that session.

For my fifth favorite point, I am going to end how I started it, by talking about how marriage is for enjoyment and the couple is supposed to enter into this kind of oneness; this ultimate closeness bound by the spirit of heaven. In chapter 12 it says, "One clearly gets the impression that marital sex--especially in Christian marriages--is boring. The Bible speaks to love, sensuality, and physical pleasure in marriages"(Stanley, S., Trathen, D., McCain, S., & Bryan, M. 2014, p. 208). This chapter is such an important read because throughout human history the topic of sex has been such a shameful subject and for most people, especially Christians, they only heard the word 'sex' when it was followed by "don't do it" or "it's bad." However, the Bible tells a completely different story, it says that sex isn't bad but can actually be really good, and holy when done inside marriage and it was the one thing we humans got to take from the garden after the fall. In a marriage, sex is so much more than what happens in the bedroom, the authors say, "Couples who enjoy the most rewarding physical union realize that in a sense, all of marriage is foreplay. Emotional, intellectual, and spiritual closeness, along with non sexual sensuality..."(Stanley, S., Trathen, D., McCain, S., & Bryan, M. 2014, p. 208). I understand and realize that so many couples I counsel are going to have intimacy problems whether it's they have only connected through physical worldly measures or they have grown up in the church where sex was never talked about and they feel completely uncomfortable. Either way, it will be my job to help them see that sex is a good thing from God that is meant to connect them spiritually all of the time.

Bibliography

Stanley, S., Trathen, D., McCain, S., & Bryan, M. (2014). *A lasting promise: A christian guide to fighting for your marriage*. Jossey-Bass.