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MFT709

Marriage and Family Enrichment

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March 9, 2023

Reflection Paper

I loved the part in *The Sacred Marriage* (Thomas, G, 2015, 11) when the author writes "What if God designed marriage to make us holy more than to make us happy?" It made me think about all the difficult times and the adjustments that two people have to become united and happy. If I was to choose one thing from this book it would be just that phrase! It carries so much meaning and depth! It made me look at my husband in a whole different way because it opened my eyes to the great sacrifices Christ made for us and now we are deepening our relationship with the Lord and our spouses all at once. Refraining from saying something that can be a sensitive topic can be an exercise of empathy but also a way to understand and care for a spouse. In therapy allowing our clients to understand the commitment and importance of such commitment can be life-changing, it can turn things around. "What if God designed marriage to make us holy more than to make us happy?" How life-altering! We are not just giving ourselves to each other but to God! We are creating an environment of growth and hope. It is hard, we will trip and fall, we will make mistakes and at times we will want to quit! But God has a purpose for all of this and it is "to make us holy!".

"I grieve for what you've gone through. But the first thing I want to do is challenge any believer who approaches divorce with the view "God will forgive me; it's best just to start over rather than to work through the hurt."(Thomas, G. 2015, 37)

I just want to say Amen to that! In this disposable society we live in, so many people are doing just that! Calling it quits without even trying to work through it. What they don't realize is that this will not prevent future problems or future disappointments. What makes us grow together and more intimate is the work we put into the relationship and sometimes we will need help from an outside person, a priest, or a therapist because our pain is getting in the way of our relationship. So many times we project into our partners our floss and we forget that we are not perfect. Marriage was also designed to be till death, not divorce due us part! In my marriage, I had to work through so many issues and I know that many more will come; however, the fact that my husband stuck with me and was willing to go to therapy and do whatever it took to help our relationship, only made me love him more. It allowed me to feel secure and cared for. I can trust him and I can understand him better because we were able to work through so much! I believe the same principle can be applied to future clients. The work pays off and to be happy we need to choose to be happy.

Yes, God will forgive! But are we going to forgive ourselves if we just get a divorce when things get hard? Are we being responsible, faithful Christians? I do not believe so!

"Instead of prayer being the tool that refines my marriage, Peter tells me that marriage is the tool that will refine my prayers!"(Thomas, G.,2015, 72) Wow! What can I say? This is so beautiful and at the same time so heavy! We can define ourselves through our marriages! And yet it is very easy to see that. I have spent so much time praying for guidance, wisdom, and strength and

I didn't realize that it was all happening while I was doing it! My marriage has helped me to become a better Christian, a better person, and as a consequence a better wife. Caring for others without expectations, giving to others without demands, and praying and embracing God without realizing how much more connected to God I am just because of all of that.

When working with Christian clients we can bring to their attention how their marriages are allowing them to become better Christians and how being vulnerable during prayer can be a life-changing experience for them.

"When I realized I am married to God's daughter- and that you, women, are married to God's son- everything about how I viewed marriage changed. God feels about my wife- his daughter - in an even holier and more passionate way than I feel about my daughters."(Thomas, G., 2015, 73)

I think we all think of one another as brothers and sisters, at least if you are Christian, but I have never stopped to think that my husband was the son of God! What a powerful thought! It makes me think about the way I act and the way I behave. I didn't marry a stranger, I am married to the son of God. The person I must give my best and love and care for, not just for him but for God. Acknowledging that changes everything in me.

Boundaries with Kids

Dr. Henry Cloud & Dr. John Townsend

For years I have struggled with boundaries, more so establishing boundaries with my kids. It is so hard to pick only a few things that stood out to me when the whole book has helped me so

much! I can use the information from the book in my professional life, teaching, and being a mother of two young boys.

The book helped me to understand that I was putting my two sons in the same category and while I had noticed that it was working for the youngest it was not working for the oldest child. When I read the book it all made sense, they were in separate age groups and the approach should have been different for each. I made the adjustments and the funny thing is that my oldest son was asking for exactly what the book was saying, more freedom to make choices and more responsibilities.

Another great lesson was "Balancing Freedom, Choices, and Consequences" (Townsend & Cloud, 2001, 63)

After I read that I felt that I had the solution to all my problems! I have to say that right after I read this chapter of the book I had the opportunity of experiencing the practical side of it. I started to reinforce to my son the consequences of his not-so-great choices and explained that I didn't do that, it was the choice that he made that had a negative consequence. Make good choices and you will enjoy good things and freedom. It was hard work and of course, he tested me to the limit many times, but I just kept on going and now I don't have to tell him to make a good choice. He is capable of analyzing the situation and choosing the right. I can see how this can help other parents, just like it helped me, in their struggles with their kids.

"The Skills of Proactive Boundaries"(Townsend & Cloud, 2001,161)

"Pausing instead of reacting, observation, perspective, problem-solving, reality, initiative, and other people."

So many times I was faced with situations where my son was overreacting or frightened and didn't know what to do. I used the principles listed in the book and while I put my spin on things the concept was just the same and it made things so much easier. It is like having a map, ready to go when you don't know what to do. The great thing is that it is a little hard in the beginning but as we use it more and more it becomes second nature. I see my son working through his problems and building resilience, empathy, and growing into a good person. What else can a mother ask for?

The readings were phenomenal and I can't say which book has made the biggest impact on my life. They are great! I truly believe that acting on the readings has helped me become a better person and because of that a better future therapist.

## References

-Thomas, G. (2015). *Sacred Marriage: What If God Designed Marriage to Make Us Holy More Than to Make Us Happy?* Zondervan.

-Townsend, J., & Cloud, H. (2001). *Boundaries with Kids: How Healthy Choices Grow Healthy Children.* Zondervan.