

Ana DaCosta

Marriage Enrichment Paper

Reflection Paper 1

My first takeaway from the book Sacred Marriage is the idea that the author presents that God designed marriage to make us holy more than to make us happy; this idea resonates with me and challenges me in my personal life to treasure my marriage better. Professionally it gives me a foundation to help my future clients to see their marriage as a God-given gift to work in their character.

Second takeaway: Getting married for the right reason: Most people get married for selfish reasons, and our society does not prepare future couples for the challenges they will face in the relationship. Reading the book helped me to see the challenges as a good thing or an opportunity to grow. I found interesting the comparison the author makes that just like the celibates using abstinence and religious hermits using isolation for Spiritual growth; we can use marriage for the same purpose. As the Bible verse teaches us, whether you eat or drink, do it for the glory of God. In this case, whether we marry or stay single, we do it for the glory of God.

I hope to help my clients see their marriage as a spiritual discipline by entering a marriage with a new perspective and seeing it to "cleanse" them spiritually. For this to happen, we must enter marriage to become more like Christ and not only be fulfilled romantically.

Third takeaway: Another point the author makes is the awareness that once we start sharing life with someone, our flaws will be exposed to our partners the same way they will be exposed to us. When one lives in isolation, their sins can be hidden, but it is hard to hide when we share the same bed. As a result, our sins are not just exposed but magnified ten times more. And to try to

avoid the exposure this reality brings, conflict arises as a defense mechanism to protect ourselves.

But I understood that seeing one another's sin is an opportunity to forgive. In addition, confronting our sins takes a lot of courage and helps us to grow in humility.

Fourth takeaway: Perseverance in the face of challenges. One of the most common reasons for divorce is that couples fall out of love and cannot deal with the challenges and conflicts in the relationship. However, the author mentions in the book that unrepented sin is behind practically every marital dissatisfaction, which ultimately results in divorce. Therefore, I hope to help my clients to persevere in their marriages, seeing the challenges as an opportunity to build perseverance and character. In addition, I hope to help them realize that wrong attitudes, personal failures, and sins that are not dealt with slowly erode the relationship making one forget the promises made at the beginning of the relationship and that, most times, divorce happens when one person or both have ceased putting the gospel first in their lives.

Fifth takeaway: Our marriage serving as a platform for evangelism. Everyone desires a good marriage, but most people approach it only to be happy. Soon they will discover that marriage can be a source of frustration and give up on it. However, suppose we as Christians carry on in our marriage the message of reconciliation, forgiving one another, and building each other up. In that case, our message will be powerful- because we won't just communicate it but also live it.

I was really touched by the story of Brady and his pledge to God as he asked for a child. He pledged not to accept any abroad speaking opportunity in the first year of the baby's life. After having the baby and receiving an invitation to go to another country and preach the gospel to people in need of it, it seemed to be the most important thing to do at the moment despite his

pledge to God; after all, we are all called to go and announce the good news for all nations. But as someone who understood that his call was also to minister to his family - actually to minister to his family first- he decided to stay and love and care for his family. After all, taking care of one's family and not neglecting them is also doing ministry before God.

Unfortunately, only some people are willing to compromise and put their careers or plans on hold. Neglect is a reality many marriages face nowadays. I hope to help even couples in my church to see this reality. I have seen many men getting so involved in ministry at the church and their calling to serve others that they forget to care for and serve their own families. In the end, the family suffers, and the "ministry" suffers since no one can take good care of God's house if they are not taking good care of their own house.

Sixth takeaway: Our satisfaction or dissatisfaction with our marriages is intrinsically connected to our relationship with God. Our earthly relationships are greatly an extension of our relationship with God. The closer we walk with Jesus the more his character will be manifested in us. One way that we can demonstrate Jesus` heart in our marriage is by serving our spouses.

Unfortunately, we live in a society where the idea of submitting to one another or putting the other person first is ridiculed. But Philippians 2 encourages us to value others more than ourselves and to focus on others' interests in addition to our own. I hope to keep this in mind as I help couples help to see the beauty in serving their spouses. After all, they are the ones who will reap the benefits in their own marriage. It seems so simple, but how have we neglected this principle?

Seventh takeaway: Communication is a discipline of love. Communication forces us to enter into one another's world. Unfortunately, I tend to avoid conflict by being silent and not engaging in an argument. However, I was really confronted by what the author said about silence being

malicious. It made me realize that in the same way that words can heal or can hurt, silence can do it too. Marriage welcomes God's presence into our daily life through good communication.