

Sacred Marriage Session 4

Sacred History: Building the Spiritual Discipline of Perseverance

The basis for building a sacred history: *"I will never leave you"*.

The meaning that comes by persevering through the seasons of life and the depth that gives to our relationships is the basis for building a sacred history.

Marriage is much more like a marathon than a sprint. Like a marathon, marriage starts with excitement, once the race begins the trials start, then you get your second wind, you go on, and there is a great sense of accomplishment when you see the finish line.

God's relationship with Israel mirrors a relationship between a husband and a wife: Joy and celebration, Seasons of frustration and anger, Times of infidelity, Excruciating seasons of silence.

We'd all love to live in the seasons of joy and celebration, but there are also lessons to learn in any of the other seasons – whatever season we find ourselves in, we can profit from it.

Marriage is a lot longer in our modern days. Number of years ago, the man or woman would have died much earlier in life.

"It takes 9-14 years for a couple to truly create and form it's being." We think of "me" instead of "we". It takes at least a decade for us to be re-patterned in our thinking and be refocused on what it really means to be a couple.

Scripture says so much about the spiritual discipline of perseverance.

- James 1:4, "Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking in anything".

There are some seasons that just need to be endured and it is simply not fair to evaluate our marriages in those seasons – at that point we just have to renew our commitment.

Building a sacred history together – at the end you can't even imagine your life apart from each other. "I didn't live this life alone, and I won't be remembered alone" (John Wooden).

Discussion

Throughout history, God has walked with his people. There have been seasons of joy and celebration, and there have been times when God's people wandered and rebelled. They experienced joyful times, frustrating times, broken times, and even silent times. Through it all, God remained faithful. A sacred history was established.

- How does God's relationship with his people mirror the journey of a husband and wife?

In your own words, what do you think Gary meant when he suggests that couples can build a sacred history together?

- What are some of the lines in your wedding vows that are essential in creating a sacred history in your marriage?
- Why do you think most wedding vows include these kinds of promises?

Why is it important to acknowledge that every marriage will have seasons of incredible intimacy and painful distance?

For much of human history, due to short life spans, most marriages lasted one to three decades. Today a couple can look forward to four, five or even six decades of married life.

- What impact does this longevity have on marriages?

What is your reaction to Gary's point that studies of the human brain have shown that it can take from a decade to fifteen years for a couple to truly create the deepest bonds and have a sense of being one? If this is true, what implications does this have on our marriages?

The very things we need for a healthy marriage are what we need for a growing walk of faith: commitment, tenacity, loyalty, and a willingness to hang in there when times get tough.

- How can a vibrant and growing faith in Jesus strengthen your marriage?
- How can an unyielding commitment to love and serve your spouse, even when things get difficult, strengthen your relationship with Jesus?

How does James 1:4 conflict with the philosophy of some people who would say, "you have to be happy in the moment"?

In a case study, researchers worked with couples who described their marriage as "severely dissatisfying" or "very severely dissatisfying." Five years later, most of the couples who chose to remain married described their marriage as "very satisfying". Of those who pursued divorce, only 17 percent said they were satisfied with their current relationship.

- How would you explain these results?
- Have you ever held a job where the same sort of thing happened; you struggled through some difficult times, but then it became something very enjoyable?

Building a sacred history means hanging in there during the challenging seasons of marriage:

- The years when you have very young children.
- The years when you've wanted to have kids but were not able to conceive.
- The years when financial stress makes it hard to make ends meet.
- The years when teenagers are testing boundaries.
- The "empty nest" years; when the kids move out.
- The years when your parents are getting on in years and need your support.

Consider one or two of the above seasons that you've been through. Applying the truths learned from our last session; what would be a God-centred attitude during these times?

- Can you think of one or more additional difficult seasons?

In chapter 7 Gary describes the experiences of Leslie. What did Leslie learn from her experiences?

Gary told the story of John Wooden and his devotion to his wife. Can you think of a couple you know who has written their own sacred history together? Is there a lesson you have (or can) learned from this couple?

Between the Sessions:

What are one or two lessons that you learned during today's session?

What kind of sacred history have you already written? What are some of the times of joy and celebration and laughter? What are some of the challenging times and how did God bring you through them? Where is God wanting to take you in your relationship?

Read Romans 5:1-5, Hebrews 12:1-3 and James 1:2-8. What is God saying about the place of perseverance in the life of a Christian?

Think of a couple that has been a model of faithfulness and perseverance. Together with your spouse, write them a note. Describe how your life and marriage have been impacted by them.

In preparation for next week, read chapter 11 of *Sacred Marriage*.