

WEEKLY REFLECTION

How many of us think about our own “happily ever afters” when we think about marriage? We desire and hunger for romance, intimacy, and companionship within the covenant bonds of marriage—without knowing that truly, it is not about us at all!

We talk about God’s love in covenantal terms, but we might not know what the word “covenant” means. Its dictionary definition is “a formal agreement or promise between two or more people”, especially “for the performance of some action.” The most well-known example of God’s covenantal love in the Old Testament is that of the Ten Commandments (Deut. 4:13). God entered into a formal agreement with His people, the Israelites, asking them to obey and to love Him. In return, He would bless them and their descendants greatly (Deut. 7). Although the Israelites broke the terms of their agreement with God and suffered the consequences of it, God never failed to show His covenantal love towards His people.

The characteristics of real, covenantal love can be found in 1 Cor. 13:4-6—Paul ends by noting that it bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things. Real, covenantal love never ends. How many of us can claim to be showing this kind of love to one another, let alone to the extent that marriage demands of us? Marriage, where the tediousness and the burdens and demands of everyday life scrape and expose our true heart motivations, down to the very bone?

For those of us who are married, or who are thinking about marriage—let us remind ourselves that it has been gifted to us for the purpose of showing each other selfless sacrifice, the way that Christ does. It is not about ourselves, and should never be about our own satisfaction. For those of us who are not married, and / or are not thinking about marriage, let us learn from the imagery and metaphor that is present within marriage as well. There will be a day when we will see God face-to-face. He will be our God, and we will be His people, covenantally and beautifully bound to Him and Him alone for all eternity.

QUESTIONS

QUESTION ONE:

Was there a time when someone important to you had made you a promise, but broke it? What was that promise, and how did it make you feel?

Was there a similar time when you had broken a promise that you made with someone? How did that make the other person feel?

QUESTION TWO:

Go through the characteristics of love as written in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7.

Knowing that this passage can be used in the context of all relationships and is not used exclusively for the marital relationship, how would you evaluate yourself and the ways that you are loving others (and perhaps even yourself!) according to what is in the Scriptures?

How does this compare with the ways that God loves you, and has loved you in the past, present, and future?

QUESTION THREE:

Love, both within and without the covenantal relationship of marriage, is a reciprocal relationship. We cannot learn to love adequately if we are not receiving, but we also cannot receive sometimes if we do not learn how to give and how to love.

Knowing that God is the only One who gives and receives freely and fully, take the time now to engage in a group activity where you are writing a note of encouragement to each of your small group members.

You may encourage them on the ways that they are loving others, or on how you think they can grow in those areas as well. Don't forget most of all to point them towards God, and towards the Father, the Son, and the Spirit's love for them.