**The Great Marriage Hoax**

*The Great Marriage Hoax is the false belief that the promise of marriage is to thoroughly satisfy our ultimate fulfillment in life. It is not.*

It is true that marriage was designed by God to be a joyful relationship; one that is full of hope and trust and intimacy and serving each other.

However, many people incorrectly see marriage as the main answer to loneliness, emptiness and incompleteness. This is a false idea and causes many problems for people: married or not.

Whether you are single or married, unrealistic expectations that marriage is our ultimate hope will break your heart. But there is a way to have realistic expectations about building a marriage that is good, happy and satisfying and one that keeps getting better and better and not worse. It all comes down to this…where do we find our hope?

The Apostle Paul was very clear about our source of hope and joy and completion.

*Colossians 2:6-10* “*So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in Him, rooted and built up in Him,**strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ. For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and in Christ you have been brought to fullness*.”

This is not a passage on marriage but it certainly relates significantly to it. It is a passage on our ultimate hopes and expectations being fulfilled not by money, fame, or success (as good as those things may be) or even by finding Mr. Right or Miss Right but through Jesus. Marriage is not designed to provide the hope that only Jesus can give any more than money or fame are. No marriage partner can possibly bear that kind of weight, Only Jesus can.

When we do look at marriage as our hope, marriage becomes in our mind and heart like a little Savior. We end up making an idol out of it. Before we are married many believe that they won’t really experience life in its fullness until they find a spouse. What we fail to realize is that Paul encourages some singles to stay single. *1 Corinthians 7:8 “To the singles and the widows, I say that it is good for them to remain single, as I am.”*

*Genesis 2:18* “*It is not good for man to be alone.”* is NOT primarily a marriage verse. Even though the first relationship was a marriage, the verse is about more than marriage. It’s about the need for human beings to not be alone, to not be isolated, or solitary. If you are single, it is certainly not good if you are alone.

But this does not necessarily mean that it is not good for you to be unmarried. It means you need to be in community, just like everyone else, including marrieds. There are too many people in our churches waiting for their lives to really begin if only they could get married.

God intends for all of us, regardless of our status, to enjoy life and wholeness NOW in Christ: regardless of what the world tells us.

When we think that marriage is the answer and we do finally meet “the one” we often invest so much hope and expectation in their ability to meet our needs that we create this person in our mind that’s almost perfect. When we enter marriage with unreal expectations, we will be incredibly disappointed.

It’s normal to face painful disappointments, but sometimes with our spouses, in whom we have put so much hope, they are so intensely painful, they threaten to drive us apart and isolate us emotionally.

*Proverbs 13:12: “Hope denied makes the heart grow sick.”*

When we experience deep disappointment like this the Bible says that it hurts our heart. Larry Crabb, a Christian psychologist and marriage counselor says in his book The Marriage Builder:

The first signs of heart trouble in our marriage are disappointment, pain and frustration, usually with a lot of arguments and bad feelings.

The second Phase is quieter but a much more serious problem: polite distance in the midst of a cold-hearted truce.

Arguments become less and less but personal closeness is gradually replaced by focusing on simply running the household, running family business, organizing the kids, organizing schedules.

What was once an intimate marriage becomes only a practical partnership, just trying to manage the details of life.

Sometimes even this truce collapses into a legal divorce or more often simply an emotional divorce and this might be where many marriages find themselves, even in the church.

But we have experienced that there is a hopeful & dependable alternative to the world’s Great Marriage Hoax: The Great Marriage Hope. The Great Marriage Hope is found in God’s design for marriage:

*Gen 1:26-31 26* *Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” 27 God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. 28 God blessed them; and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”*

In this passage, we see that man and woman were both created in the image of God. Unlike rocks, trees and elephants, God installed extra “image-of-God” software in humans, things like: Self-awareness, Moral Consciousness, Responsible Choice etc. Both man and woman were then commissioned by God to provide leadership and management over His creation under His authority.

In Genesis 1 and 2 Adam and Eve had a Master and they had a Mission. Then after the Master described the Mission, at the end of chapter 2 He says to those He calls to marriage in *Gen 2:24* “*For this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife and the two shall become one flesh*.”

For this reason, God’s design and purpose for marriage is ONENESS, So That together two people will serve their Master to accomplish their Mission better than they could serve their Master to accomplish their Mission separately.

They are both to serve their Master, to accomplish their Mission In the oneness of Marriage. A successful marriage occurs when unity for the sake of the Mission and the Master is preserved, and not just preserved, but developed and thriving and wonderful – together -- This is the purpose of marriage.

Although God intends for marriage to be characterized by love, joy and all the fruit of the Spirit, it is not marriage that provides these blessings. That is not its purpose.

Marriage should be a wonderful blessing. Marriage is not the source -- It is Jesus. “*I came that they might have life and have it abundantly…I am the way the truth and the life…I am the resurrection and the life…I am the bread of life…If any man is thirsty let Him come to ME and drink…Come unto ME all who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest*” When we come to Jesus, He meets our needs.

Because Jesus meets our needs, we no longer have to try to get our life from our relationships. We are FREE to truly serve our spouse (as well as the other people in our lives). Even if our spouse or colleague does not cooperate: It takes two to make a partnership, but…It only takes one to do the right thing with the power and security that only Jesus can provide.