

VOWS

I TAKE THEE

2.9.2014 - GROUP DISCUSSION
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START

To get things started, go around the circle and answer this question:

If you had to watch one romantic comedy, which one would you pick and why? (Fellas, you need to pick one) Do you think Hollywood's depiction of relationships in movies is based on reality?

SHARE

Welcome to the brand new series entitled, "Vows." We have all heard vows before; in fact most of us have confessed vows to ourselves and to others. We have vowed to lose weight, get in shape, make things right, fix that relationship, break that addiction, come through for someone. We have all been to weddings where we have heard vows such as..."I take thee, for better or for worse, richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health till death do us part, " and we wait for the crescendo by the pastor when he states, "you may kiss the bride."

If we are honest, we have seen some marriages thrive, while others break apart. We have seen vows forgotten and broken. Whether vows in marriage, friendships, work or as individuals, we have broken commitments and hurt others or have been hurt by others. Throughout this series we will study, talk, and share about commitments. Among the debris of broken promises and pain, there stands one who will never walk out, give up or break his vow to us. It is God himself. The Lord will not break his vow to uphold us, love us and he will never abandon us. Our entire Christian faith is based on God's promise to His peoples; it is the most perfect love story.

King Solomon, one of the wisest men to ever live uttered this simple, but profound statement about vows:

Let's read:
Ecclesiastes 5:4-5

Have you ever made a new year's resolution, then broke it? What was it? How many times have you broken them and how did it make you feel afterwards?

Can you think of someone who upheld a commitment they made to you? If so, how does it make you feel to know they have stayed true?

GROW

Let's be honest, haven't we all sat through weddings that have been a little over the top at times? We are so happy for the new couple, but we often times reflect on our own marriage or lack thereof and think about how difficult it can be. Many of us wish we had been better equipped and ready for marriage.

Tim Keller is refreshingly honest in his book, *The Meaning of Marriage*, "I'm tired of listening to sentimental talks on marriage. At weddings, in church, and in Sunday school, much of what I've learned on the subject has as much depth as a Hallmark card. While marriage is many things, it is anything but sentimental. Marriage is glorious, but it is hard. It's a burning joy and strength, and yet it's also blood, sweat and tears, humbling defeats and exhausting victories. No marriage I know more than a few weeks old can be described as a fairy tale come true."

This series called "Vows" is important, because there is sadly an ever-increasing degree of cynicism when it comes to commitment, and we have lost sight of the hope that comes with truly understanding God's commitment to our lives. By understanding and embracing that, we can have the strength to dig in, when the world tells us to give up. As difficult as it can be, dying to self can reap a harvest of life according to Jesus.

Luke 12:24-25

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

The Holman New Testament Commentary on Luke gives insight:

"Not only does this principle of dying and rising apply to Christ; it becomes a whole mindset for his followers. As Tasker observes, 'The grain of wheat must fall into the ground and die that it may produce fruit. Even so, eternal life for the many comes through the sacrifice of the One. And the same providential law is applicable to each individual believer. He must disown the imperious authority of his selfish ego, if he is to live the life of an integrated person; he must abandon ruthlessly a self-centered existence lived in conformity to the standards of the world, if the higher element in him is to be preserved unto life eternal. This he cannot do by himself. He must have an example to follow. Jesus is that example. By looking to Him, a life of service to Him is made possible; and that life of service constitutes the "dying in order to live" which is the theme of Jesus' teaching in this passage (Tasker, p. 148).' The word life is mentioned three times in verse 25. But the first two translate *psuche* and the third *zoe*, an obvious difference referring to life in this world (physical) and life eternal. But what does verse 25 mean? Presumably this call to obedience is predicated on the demonstration that Christ would do anything the Father asked. Those who wanted to follow him (whether disciples or inquiring Greeks) had to follow that same pattern.

Why is it hard to die to self-centeredness?

Have you ever "died to yourself" in a situation and then experienced life sprout forth out of that situation? What did you learn?

MOVE

The idea of commitment and dying to self-centeredness come together as a package deal. Whether it is in marriage, friendships, work relationships or parenting, we all need God-given strength to keep our commitments and to die to self in stressful situations. God tells us we need to be careful on how we live and to live wisely, making the most of opportunities, to be filled with the Spirit and see God do powerful and amazing things in and through us!

One of the most difficult areas to submit to Christ is in our marriages. It can be difficult to trust each other if we have been hurt in the past. Both women and men are created equally created in God's image and heirs together of eternal life. So when it comes to marriage, how do we do this relational dance? What does God say to us?

Husbands are commanded by God to love their wives and give up their own lives for her in the same way Christ gave up his life for us. Husbands are to submit to the Lord in all their ways. Jesus was a servant-leader, humble and broken and husbands are to reflect that. Wives are to submit to their husbands as to the Lord. Husbands and wives are to both submit out of reverence to Christ, loving and trying to out-serve each other. This is the beautiful and difficult dance of marriage.

Read Ephesians 5:15-33

If you are a man, do you think men are doing a good job at loving their wives and laying down their own lives to put their wives above themselves? Why do you think there is such a lack of Godly examples of men with integrity these days? What needs to change?

If you are a woman, do you think women are doing a good job at loving their husbands, dying to self and trusting Christ in their marriages? How do you think women can be better Godly examples these days? What needs to change?

Considering all that has been talked about today, what has God laid on your own heart? Is there a relationship that you need to trust Christ with right now?

PRAY

As a group, spend some time praying for each other and the struggles that we all face. If you are in a co-ed group, consider breaking up into men and women's groups to talk more freely.

TO GO

Ephesians 5:1

Be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Another great resource to read about marriage is "Love and Respect" by Dr. Emerson Eggerichs.

Special Note about this LG Weekly:

It is important to note that this LG Weekly study can bring up some difficult topics and memories. Remember, there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For many of us who have experienced the pain of broken relationships or marriages, remember that you are forgiven, loved and belong. All of us have fallen short, so you are among a group that is all broken. The important thing is to decide what you think God wants you to do next for you are already loved and accepted by God.

Don't give up, dig in, ask for prayer and let's move on together!