

THE FOREST HILL NEWS

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Forest Hill Church of Christ

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VISIT US SOON!

Sunday:

Bible Study..... 9:30 A.M.
Morning Worship.. ...10:30 A.M.
Evening Worship..... 6:00 P.M.

Wednesday:

Bible Study7:00 P.M.

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FUNDAMENTAL FACTS CONCERNING MARRIAGE (Part Two)

Barry M. Grider

Third, marriage is for life. "Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Gen. 2:24). Recently my daughter suffered a fall and cut her chin. The gash was deep enough that it needed the doctor's attention, so I took her to the emergency room. The doctor stated it was not deep enough for a stitch but he did apply Dermabond glue to seal the opening and allow the skin to grow together once more. The word cleave carries the idea of bonding together like glue. Marriage does not come with a 90-day option, but is for life. Jesus said, (and I repeat His words when I perform a wedding ceremony), "...What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matt. 19:6). The vows a couple make to each other may be similar to the following,

I take you to be my wedded wife/husband, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better - for worse, for richer - for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish **till death us do part.**

These vows are not only made to each other, but usually before witnesses, and for sure before God. It is absolutely essential we honor the vows we make before Him (Eccl. 5:4).

Fourth, marriage requires work. Robert Keeler said, "Marriage is like twirling a baton, turning handsprings, or eating with chopsticks. It looks easy until you try it." The idea that a couple lives happily ever after, without working to make their marriage great, is a myth. Great marriages do not happen automatically or accidentally, couples work to make it so. This requires selflessness on the part of the husband and wife. Selflessness requires *agape* love as described by Paul in First Corinthians 13.

Several years ago I read the following from a couple, Dillon and Patti Bayes, members of the Talladega church of Christ in Talladega, Alabama. They won the Happy Marriage contest in the June 1996 *Good Housekeeping Magazine*, out of 12,000 entries. The secret to the success of their marriage, according to this couple, is:

We gave...when we WANTED to receive.
We served...when we WANTED to feast.
We shared...when we WANTED to keep.
We listened...when we WANTED to talk.
We submitted...when we WANTED to reign.
We forgave...when we WANTED to remember.
We stayed...when we WANTED to leave.

Not only is marriage going to take a lot of work, it is worth all of a couple's efforts.

HOW DID GOD HARDEN PHARAOH'S HEART?

Chuck Webster

God's sending the ten plagues upon Egypt has no doubt fascinated many of us since we were children. Who hasn't wondered what it would be like to have millions of frogs everywhere – in your bedroom, your bed, your oven, your cooking pans (Ex. 8:3)? And then to have them all die at the same time – Moses really understated the matter when he said simply, “and the land stank” (Ex. 8:14). What would it be like if all the dust in the country turned to lice? Or if all the drinking water turned to blood? This story has intrigued us all since we began to hear it in Sunday school years ago. In this Bible story, however, God made a statement which many have struggled with: “And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt. But Pharaoh will not heed you, so that I may lay My hand on Egypt by great judgments. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt and bring out the children of Israel from among them” (Ex. 7:3-5). With only a cursory reading of that passage, we might think that God forced Pharaoh to disobey Him. In fact, many who hold a Calvinistic view of God make that argument. But to determine how God hardened Pharaoh's heart, we need to consider first the overall thrust of the bible, and then this apparent difficulty will vanish.

Several important biblical principles are abundantly clear.

1. God never forces man to do anything against his own will. Contrary to what some teach, we do not have to do anything we do not want to do – a fact that has been true since the beginning of time. When God placed Adam and Eve in the garden He gave them specific instructions concerning what they could and could not do, but He did not make their decisions for them. When Eve was tempted by the serpent God didn't intervene to keep her from sinning. Did He want her to sin? Of course not! He chose not to stop her because He made human beings with free will. He has always encouraged us to choose the right way, but He has never forced us (Deut. 30:15ff; Josh. 24:15; Prov. 1:29; 3:31). Our service, worship, and obedience as well as our disobedience are by our own choice. No one can force us to act contrary to our will.

2. God cannot even tempt man to sin, much less cause him to. Notice what James wrote: “Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am tempted by God’; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone” (Jam. 1:13). It is against God's divine nature to tempt man to sin. A perfectly holy and just God causing man to commit an unholy action is a contradiction of terms!

3. God loves man and wants him to be saved. Surely if there is any theme in the Bible which is repeatedly emphasized it is God's love for man. He is “not willing

that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9). Is it possible that God could send His only begotten Son to earth to suffer and die for man's sin and at the same time compel him to sin (Jn 3:16)? Surely God's love and desire for man to be saved prohibits His causing him to sin.

4. God can look into the future, know how men will react to certain circumstances, and use those events to His glory without causing them to happen. For example, God knew that Jesus would be crucified thousands of years before it happened. He told the serpent in the garden that Eve's seed (Christ) would bruise Satan's head (Gen. 3:15) – a prophecy that was fulfilled at the cross. Peter clearly stated that the crucifixion of Christ was according to God's predetermined plan. “[Christ], being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death” (Acts 2:23). Peter could not have called an action of God a “wicked” thing; but that is exactly what he did if we are to equate foreknowledge with the removal of man's free will. But the fact that God foreknew an event and even predetermined how it would fit into His sovereign plan does not mean that He forced the participants to carry out certain actions. It would violate God's equity if He had forced men to crucify Jesus and then condemned them for doing something in which they had no choice.

Now, understanding that God always allows man to have free will, that He never tempts anyone to commit sin, that He wants all to be saved, and that His foreknowledge does not imply His directly causing an action to occur, we turn our attention to the matter of Pharaoh. The Bible plainly states that God hardened Pharaoh's heart (Ex. 4:21; 7:3,13; 9:12; 10:1,20,27; 11:10; 14:4,8). But the bible also asserts that Pharaoh hardened his own heart (Ex. 8:15, 32; 9:34). Which is true? Certainly the Bible does not contradict itself, and upon a closer examination, we see that the passages are perfectly consistent. God hardened Pharaoh's heart by telling this heathen ruler to do something he was not willing to do. He told Pharaoh to let the Israelites leave Egypt – something Pharaoh absolutely did not want to do. Yet, at the same time, God never took away Pharaoh's free will. Egypt's ruler could have obeyed God at any time if he had chosen to do so. But he chose not to, and in so doing hardened his own heart. He refused to submit his will to God's will. God, because of His omniscience, looked into the future and knew how Pharaoh would react to this situation. Pharaoh was a worldly king who cared nothing for the God of heaven. God chose to use these circumstances to show the Egyptians and the Israelites His great power and glory. He never forced Pharaoh to disobey Him. Rather, He used a heart that was already hard to accomplish His will.

Does God harden hearts today? Certainly. But He does so only indirectly through the effect that His

Word has on the hearts it touches. “For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb. 4:12). When God’s Word contracted those present at Pentecost, it “pricked” their heart, creating in them the desire to be saved (Acts 2:37). When the same word met Stephen’s accusers, these hearers were “cut to the heart” (Acts 7:54). Instead of their hearts conforming to the intent of Stephen’s message, they became like stone, causing them to search for stones to kill God’s servant. The difference in the responses of Acts 2 and Acts 7 lay not in the message, but in the nature of the hearts. We should be concerned with making sure our hearts are conditioned so that they become soft and pliable when confronted with biblical precepts. (from Words of Truth, February, 2004— Chuck preaches for the Hoover church of Christ, Hoover, AL)

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Fifth, make sure Christ is invited to your wedding and into your home. According to John 2, Jesus attended a wedding feast in Cana of Galilee. It was here that he performed his first miracle (v.11). Evidently the Lord was invited to this special occasion. By His presence he sanctioned what was taking place. Often Jesus found himself in the homes of others. Have you made Him a permanent guest in your home? If He is first and your wife is second, she will be so happy! If He is first and your husband is second, he will be so happy! Listen to the words of the following poem:

Marriage Takes Three

Marriage takes three
To be complete;
It’s not enough
For two to meet.
They must be united in love
By love’s Creator,
God above.
A marriage that
Follows God’s plan
Takes more than
A woman and man.
It needs a oneness
That can be
Only from Christ-
Marriage takes three.

Beth Stuckwisch

Christ is the great home builder (Psm. 127:1). Let us invite Him into our homes and build upon His solid and sure principles, which make our marriages great!

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