

# The Absurdity of Marriage – Eccles 9:9

## *The Glorious Mystery that is Marriage I*

**Introduction** - "(M)arriage is a paradox second only to life itself. That at the age of twenty or so, with little knowledge of each other and a dangerous overdose of self-confidence, two human beings should undertake to commit themselves for life – and that church and state should receive their vows with a straight face – all this is absurd indeed. And it is tolerable only if it is revealed in as such. A pox on all the neat little explanations as to why it is reasonable to that two teenagers should be bound to each other until death. It is not reasonable. It happens to be true to life, but remains absurd." – R. Capon.

Marriage is glorious. Marriage is impossible. Marriage is a mystery. Marriage is absurd.

**The Set-up** (Eccles 8:16-9:9) – There are numerous ways to set up a marriage series. This "set-up" is to acknowledge that marriage is beyond us and yet is a glorious gift to us. There is a way to acknowledge that marriage is beyond us that winds up being a decision to be defeated; and there is a way to acknowledge that marriage is beyond us that frees us to enjoy the gift. Solomon's intention with regard to marriage (and all of life as well in Ecclesiastes) is the latter. However, without a fierce faith in an all-sovereign, all-good, and yet never-tame God, we tilt ever closer to the former.

Solomon sought to gain wisdom (to understand the "why's" of life) and all he got was sleepless nights (8:16). Everything he saw was the work of God and yet in it, no one could know the purpose of what God was doing (v17). One cannot discover whether God is blessing and loving or hating and cursing by looking at the external events and circumstances (8:1-3). It is better, however, to be struggling for the blessing and alive, than to have died not finding the answer, no matter how wonderful your life had been (vv4-6). For those with faith, we are commanded to go and rejoice in our lives, in "*all the days of*" our *vain*, little, mixed up, not-working-right lives (vv7-8) including (and probably first of all for those of us married) our marriages (v9). This kind of fierce joy is a gift of God as well; it doesn't come due to circumstances (remember vv1-3). You know you are on the road to this joy when you acknowledge that "*God has already accepted your works*" (v7). We must rest in our justification by faith as the foundation for living with real joy.

**Marriage is Absurd** – Why would God choose to bring two fallen youngsters, full of themselves, to make a lifetime commitment to one another when they hardly know the first thing about themselves and nothing about their future? Why would He require marriage be between a man and a woman, two incredibly (painfully?) different humans physiologically, emotionally, hormonally – two who probably will never view the world or their lives quite the same?

**Absurd from the Start** (Gen 2:18-22) – If you do not see the absurdity in the story, you are too familiar with it. There should be warnings in the Bible: The Following Was Done by Professionals. Do Not Try This At Home!

**But They Liked It!** (Gen 2:23-25) – And yet, this is done over and over in the pattern of it all in homes all over the world (Eph 5:31-32).

**Marriage is Absurd because it requires each person to die –**

What is the key, the gimmick, the trick, to a great marriage, or to revitalizing, renewing, and refreshing an existing marriage? It is simple: both parties need to die. Foundationally, this means that two people, a man and a woman, need to be disciples of Jesus Christ (Mark 8:34-38).

*"A godly marriage does not consist of this marital technique or that one. A godly marriage occurs when a man and a woman both die to themselves, and are raised to the life that seeks the best interests of the other in all things. This is the only kind of godly marriage there is. And when we give all away in this manner, we discover that we receive all. We learn to give in order to receive, in order to be able to give some more. And we are married to someone who is doing the same thing"* – D. Wilson

**Absurd Reactions** – Too often, women hear these words and give themselves to Bible study, read books on marriage, and in *their own minds*, get way ahead of their husbands. She is often flummoxed that her husband is such a spiritual deadbeat. What she fails to see is her own refusal to die herself, refusing to respect, honor, and submit to her husband, refusing to get rid of her sin of bitterness, placing her hope in her circumstances which must change if she is ever to rejoice.

Men, with just as much absurdity, see their wives desperately reading books, doing devotions, and think that they must be doing a pretty good job. "She's fine, I'm fine, it's all fine..." Their sins are often sins of omission, refusing to actively and sacrificially love their wives as Christ loved the church – and died for her.

**"Ummmm...so where's the joy?"** – Why would we want to die to ourselves in our relationship with our spouse? Well, why would we want to die and follow Jesus? The questions go hand in hand.

We only die with Christ because we want His resurrection life. And this is the first resurrection. And as we walk in Christ, we continue to experience little dyings that lead, in God's perfect timing, to little resurrections (times of refreshing). Life comes from death. Joy comes from death to circumstances and thankful faith in the One who has given it all. If He gives it, you can eat your bread with gladness, drink your wine with merriment, and rejoice with the wife of your vain little life. And that is absurd – to those without faith.