**SUCCESSFUL MARRIAGES FROM THE BIBLE (Cleveland 5-12-13)**

**INTRODUCTION**

It has been 10 years since I preached here in a gospel meeting. It is a blessing to be back. My family was much younger then. Daniel was not even a Christian yet. This afternoon, Lord willing, you will be able to hear firsthand how he is growing in the Lord! I am thankful to be starting your meeting and I am honored that you want me to close the meeting on Friday. I am glad all my girls (Beth, Samantha, Jessie, and Blake) are here today as well.

Many dear friends are here and have moved here. I also hope to meet and get to know new friends. I believe all of the speakers for your meeting this week are friends of mine. I believe all the lessons they present will be helpful in understanding God’s marriage better.

**Now to this morning’s lesson**. Most of our fellow Americans take a sinful position in sanctioning same sex marriage. These are marring and ruining the beauty of marriage as God ordained it. Let’s notice some scriptures that remind us how beautiful God’s Marriage of one husband and one wife is intended to be.

**THE BEAUTY OF GOD’S MARRIAGE**

**Genesis 1:27-28, 2:21-24; Psalm 128; Proverbs 5:15-19, 18:22, 19:14; Song of Solomon –** The phrase“my beloved” is used 34 times!; **1 Peter 3:1-12** (Beth and I found that this entire context was helpful in a study we recently had).

**LET’S NOW TURN OUR FOCUS TO A FEW BIBLE EXAMPLES OF SUCCESSFUL MARRIAGES**

**Sarah and Abraham**

Notice the relationship referred to in **1 Peter 3:1-6.** Notice the inward beauty of Sarah is focused on here even though she was a very beautiful woman physically.Let us read what **Hebrews 11:8-19** says about Abraham and Sarah. No resistance from Sarah when Abraham was to sacrifice Isaac or when Abraham was not as faithful as he should have been. Abraham also showed respect for Sarah in **Genesis 21:1-14** and **Genesis chapter 23**. Both Abraham and Sarah readily accepted God’s will throughout their marriage. They respected one another and more importantly grew in their respect for God!

**Ruth and Boaz**

Boaz was a well-respected Hebrew man. Ruth was not an Israelite but was of the land of Moab. ***Why did this work?*** Because Ruth loved the God of Miriam with all her heart and Boaz loved God (**Ruth 1:16-17, 2:4, 10-13, 20, 3:8-13, 4:9-22**). Ruth became the mother of Obed the father of Jesse, the father of David, in the lineage of Jesus (**Matthew 1:5-6, 16**)! Mutual love for God and respect for one another!

**Hannah and Elkanah**

We have information on this marriage recorded in **1 Samuel 1:1-2:11, 18-21**. Hannah was one of Elkanah’s wives. No detail given on how this came to be. The other wife, Peninnah, made Hannah miserable because her womb was closed. Hannah and Elkanah were devoted worshippers of God. Hannah prayed in the sight of Eli the high priest. She asked God for a son and if granted she would raise him up to serve God as a Nazirite. Eli tells her the God of Israel had granted her petition. She conceives a son, Elkanah continues to go to offer sacrifices to God in Shiloh. Elkanah respects Hannah’s wishes to wait to bring the boy until he is weaned (**1 Samuel 1:23**). After Samuel is weaned Hannah brings him with bulls, flour, and wine to the house of the Lord in Shiloh and then to Eli. Hannah keeps her promise to God, obviously with Elkanah’s approval and they worshipped the Lord there (**1 Samuel 1:28**). Imagine the Love for God they had. To give their son to God! There is no record of Elkanah resisting, but rather he honors Hannah’s promise to God! After this Hannah prayers a beautiful prayer of praise of the Lord with no sign of remorse in **1 Samuel 2:1-10!** Elkanah returns home and his son stays to minister to the Lord (**1 Samuel 2:11**). Elkanah and Hannah are blessed by God through Eli to have three more sons and two more daughters, while Samuel grew before the Lord (**1 Samuel 2:21**). Mutual love and respect for one another and a great love for God made this marriage a great success!

**Priscilla and Aquila**

We learn about the married couple of Priscilla and Aquila in a few New Testament passages (**Acts 18:1-3, 18, 24-28, Romans 16:3-5, 1 Corinthians 16:19**). They are tentmakers and work with the Apostle Paul. They are well versed in the Gospel and privately show a powerful teacher the way of the Lord more accurately. Then Paul remembers them in the closing of two books of the Bible as brethren who have risked their necks for the life of Paul. He also acknowledges the church in their house. This is a husband and wife team who has the Lord’s will as a priority in their lives. They teach, provide for, and help the Lord’s cause and the Lord’s people at every opportunity!

**CLOSING THOUGHTS**

The common thread in the four marriages from the Bible we have looked at is there was a priority to please God (**Luke 14:26-27**). When both spouses make God their priority; they grow closer to God as they grow closer to one another. I do not know where Beth and I would be without God in our lives. We have had our ups and downs, but God has brought us closer and closer together in the last 25 years. He can do the same for you!

Whether we are married or not, let us learn from these Bible marriages. If we put the Lord first, God will provide all we need in this life and will guide us on the path that leads to eternal life with Him (**Matthew 6:33, 7:14**).

If you have not become a Christian, the most important part of a successful marriage is missing in your life. The love of God (**Mark 12:29-30**).

If you love Him you will keep His commandments. Those commandments include becoming a disciple by repenting of your sins and being baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (**Matthew 28:18-20**).

If you are a Christian who has been falling short of being the spouse He expects you to be, repent to Him and your spouse and be determined to do better! ***You will never regret that choice!***

If you are a Christian who is not yet married, put the Lord first in your life and you will make a great spouse one day, Lord willing.

If we can help you now, please come forward while we stand and sing!