

February 29, 1992

Wedding Notes
(From Michael & Mirah's Wedding)

The song we are about to dance to is a Hebrew song called "Dodi Li." Its most important words are: "My beloved is mine and I am his," and the refrain: "You have ravished my heart, my sister, my bride, you have ravished my heart." These words speak of trust.

In this day and age of rights, it is easy to lose sight of the rights we have as creatures made in the image of God. These are our birthrights. It is the right of every human being to look in the eyes of at least one other person and totally, absolutely trust them. To know that they would never deliberately do them harm and only seek their good. Every married person in this room should be able to do this right now. This trust reflects the nature of God Himself and His heart towards man. There are ways this trust is established and there are ways it is broken down.

Virginity was once a sign of normal, wholesome goodness. It was seen as cheap and tawdry to trade it in for self-centered pleasure instead of reserving your whole being for your spouse. A woman bears a sign of virginity in her flesh, a covering over her most private, intimate place. Behind that sign lies the essence of her identity in creation — she is the bearer of life. That was the name of the first woman, Havah, or Eve, the mother of all living.

When women kept themselves for their husbands it was a sign that she was also reserving for him her whole self, her whole life, her love for him alone. All over the world this was once seen as a noble thing that a young woman would so guard her heart. Today, of course, it is seen as a light, inconsequential thing to lose your virginity. Actually, it has grave consequences.

When a young man kept himself pure for the day of his wedding, he showed that he wasn't going to be one of the boys. It showed he'd become an adult. An adult is someone who has learned to put aside his selfish nature and is capable of looking out for the good of others. Some people never grow up. Make no mistake about it, all sexual relationships outside of a man and his wife are selfish and without foundation. A man who keeps himself pure would only desire a

woman who kept herself pure. A man who would keep himself pure shows that he fears and honors his Creator.

The loss of the honorable and essential place of virginity signals the loss of the birthright. There is an inevitable cost to violating your conscience in such a fundamental matter — it does irreparable harm to your ability to form deep relationships. Sexuality before or outside of marriage or not between a man and a woman twists something in the very nature of a man or woman. It damages the most godlike aspect of humanity — people's ability to make and keep a *Covenant*.

Men and women need friends. They need other human beings to not fear the cost of being their true friend. Because when you get involved in someone's life, you get the whole package. Casual friendships, casual sex, and living together all avoid the lifelong commitment of friendship. The demands of friendship are too high for the selfish heart. But without such friendship men and women do not fully develop and become whole. Their personalities and character remains fragmented and immature. You can see the result of this all around you in society. It is a tragedy.

The very word *covenant* is all but meaningless today. A contract is the closest concept most of us have. Instead of entering the covenant of marriage, couples now sign prenuptial agreements, dividing up their assets in anticipation of the time when their mutual selfishness no longer allows them to live together.

But in reality, in the truth that we all know, there is something deep in the heart of every person that longs to covenant with another. All true covenants are blood covenants. A blood covenant is the closest, most enduring, most solemn and sacred of all contracts. They will be loyal to it to the point of shedding their own blood. That is why there is blood shed at the time you make a covenant; it means that this agreement is made at the expense of your own life. You are saying that your commitment to this person means more to you than your life.

This desire to be bound together in covenants — to promise your life, love, and protection unto death to another human being — is inborn in all men and women. It is in human

beings because it is in their Creator. They are like Him. This desire is behind the desire in men and women to marry. Marriage is a blood covenant that is sealed by the shedding of blood upon the union of a man and woman. The marriage covenant is a covenant unto death. Breaking it deserves death.

The man who would lie with a virgin and then forsake her is a treacherous man — never to be trusted again. The virgin who would lie with a man and forsake him has taken on the nature of a harlot — whether she chooses to be paid in money or other wages. They have both turned their backs on the true meaning of a man and woman, becoming one flesh in the sexual union. That union is meant to establish the bonding of marriage. It means that all other aspects of their relationship are right and ready. That union enhances the personalities of both the man and wife. It is the foundation for all trust between them. It is the basis of a moral society. Where that trust is lacking, men and women have turned their back on their birthright. The birthright of human beings is to be like their Creator. Michael and Mirah are about to enter and then consummate the covenant of marriage. Regardless of what it may cost them to maintain it, they will never break the covenant.

There is another reason we are dancing here today. Many of us were treacherous covenant breakers and instead of bearing deserved condemnation in our conscience we have been forgiven. Because it was so much in the nature and character of our God to enter blood covenants that He sent His son to make Himself one with humanity. He bore the weight of our guilt. In gratitude we have promised Him our life and love until death. He is making us the faithful, trustworthy people we weren't. We can look each other in the eyes and see friends. Friends love at all times.

Marriage

There is a proverb that says, "Hope springs eternal in the human heart." No matter how much damage and disorder there have been in marriages, every generation and every culture goes to great lengths to put on a wedding. It is in every parent's heart to do all that is in their

power to see that their child has a happy marriage. The same hope that unstoppably wells up in parents when their child is born — regardless of their circumstances, regardless of the situation in the world, motivates them again when their child marries.

Each culture prepares the young people for marriage. A couple's preparation for marriage readies them for their initial intimacy. It also has an underlying purpose of making an impression upon the two: This is your wife — love, cherish and protect her; this is your husband — respect and obey him. All the fanfare and hoopla of a wedding are meant to impress upon both of them that this same attitude, this same affection, loyalty, and trust you have for each other today you are to have for the rest of your lives. Anything else is the start of the dulling process that leads to adultery. Anything else is sin.

But we are marrying these two, Michael and Mirah, because we believe God has put them together. That means that the way they treat each other today is the way they will always treat each other. Friends love at all times.

Hope springs up at birth because that is how God sees the baby. Each new image of Himself is capable of honoring Him. Each new child can be part of fulfilling God's purposes on earth. God is happy when children are born. That is why parents have that deep, emotional joy at birth.