**I Believe in Marriage**

Allow me to confess something early on in our time together considering “Coupling.” I believe in marriage. My wife and I have been married for 29 years. All of our closest friends have been married as long or longer. Not everyone is so fortunate. And maybe your experience has left you a little jaded or worse yet, the examples you’ve seen don’t draw you to the hope and possibilities of marriage.

To illustrate my position, I’ll draw from several streams of life.

We have to start with love. Love is primary. In terms of marriage, love tells us something about ourselves. It speaks to our maturity and readiness for a relationship. Love will triumph if we trust it. So if you know yourself then you know when it’s time to give yourself to someone. A serious commitment is the reasonable and mutually hoped for choice when we know ourselves and cannot resist from loving the other.

I think we ought to be intentional about living our lives. We do this through commitment and perseverance. We have to work for the best things in our lives. And Marriage can certainly be one of the best things but it also takes work. An example of this is found in the tension between childhood fantasies and how the world really works.

Let me explain. You can’t take the attitude of a child who wants a glass of milk. I love a glass of milk and appreciate when someone brings me one. But consider the farmer who brings his child a glass of milk. He maintains the barn, feeds the cow, milks the cow and carries the milk to the house. The fruit of his labor is only enjoyed as a result of much work. Marriage requires a lot of behind the scenes work to be enjoyed. The lover sees this labor as joy, but the service works when it’s reciprocal. You will recognize that I am borrowing from the idiom, “why buy the cow when you can get the milk for free?” If you don’t know the old adage, ask somebody you can trust.

Part of my belief in Marriage is rooted in biblical principles. The Bible is very clear about the purpose and sanctity of marriage. Simply put, that the “two shall become one.” (Matthew 19:4-6). Consider the examples starting with Adam and Eve and ending with Joseph and Mary. In my opinion, I’ll simply say, marriage is God’s gift to mankind.

Another point supporting marriage that others may relate to is found in recent surveys and clinical studies. Polls show married folks are not only happier and live longer, but they even report more satisfying sex lives. The security provided in the committed relationship does a lot for your happiness and for your biochemistry. We produce less stress hormones called cortisols and this leads to better overall health and coping with stressful events.

 You can see why I believe in marriage; love perseveres, love is mutual, and love pulls relationships together while strengthening our lifestyles. I will focus in later columns on the dynamics and trials of being in a committed relationship. But in my mind, marriage is the highest and best model of sincere coupling.