

3 Maxims That Have Guaranteed 42 Years of Happy Marriage

“He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much. And he who is dishonest in the least is also dishonest also in much” (Luke 6:10).

In the midst of Bill Clinton’s marital infidelity, Hillary contacted Billy Graham asking if he would meet with her for counsel. He agreed but only in a place with others present. Was this an insignificant little thing?

A number of months ago the media had a circus mocking Vice President Pence for saying that he never meets alone with a woman except for his wife. Does it really matter?

How we handle small, seemingly insignificant things in life determines our destiny. Remember the three maxims of life:

- Life is a series of choices.
- Choices have consequences.
- Choices determine destiny.

This week, my wife and I enjoyed a getaway to Memphis, Tennessee to celebrate our 42nd anniversary, plus commemorate the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. who was killed there 50 years ago on April 4. Their newly opened civil rights museum is an outstanding educational experience.

Reverend King understood the importance of faithfulness to little things in life. Before his death he shared this story.

Saved by a Sneeze

The evening before Martin’s assassination, he delivered an extemporaneous sermon to 2,500 people at a church in Memphis. That speech is referred to as the “mountaintop” speech because he spoke prophetically of seeing the promised land but, like

Moses, he wouldn't enter.

In his speech, Dr. King recounted an event from 10 years earlier in Harlem when a deranged lady had stabbed him in the chest with a letter opener! Doctors later told journalists that if he had sneezed at the moment of the wound, he would've died. The blade came that close to his aorta.

Winding down his message, his last in a public gathering, the civil rights champion told of a letter that he'd received while recuperating in the hospital after the stabbing. The writer said, "I am a ninth-grade student at the White Plains High School. While it should not matter, I would like to mention that I'm a white girl." She ended her letter with these words, "I am so happy you didn't sneeze."

In his familiar oratorical fashion, Dr. King repeated the words, "If I had sneezed" multiple times as a refrain. He declared there wouldn't have been the many achievements of the civil rights movement in the previous decade, including the March on Washington and 1964 Civil Rights Act. Something small, a little thing made all the difference in the world.

Marriage Consists of Little Things

"It's not that love's left that's my great dismay; it's just that it's left in such little ways." These famous words represent the lament of spouses everywhere regarding their negligent mate.

Recently I read about a couple who remarried after divorcing 50 years ago! Their advice: "Pay more attention to each other."

How many marriages end in divorce, especially through adultery because of failure to pay attention to the little things that make for a strong marriage? Steering clear of romantic involvements that start with "innocent" texts ... maintaining regular times for meaningful communication ... quickly asking

forgiveness to avoid the “little foxes that spoil the vineyards” (Song cm2:15).

Here in Nashville, the entire community is still reeling from the moral failure of our liberal mayor and her adultery with her security officer. She resigned in disgrace and also faced felony theft charges. Her romantic “side” trips to France and Greece probably consisted of many little things neglected that led to her tragic downfall.

As my wife and I honor God and His grace for over four decades of covenant marriage, we are ever mindful that it is He who’s enabled us to be faithful to those initial marriage vows when we said “divorce is not an option” and “we’ll never even use the term” (which we haven’t in 42 years).

Little things matter, like when George W. Bush was in the White House and would get his wife a cup of coffee each morning or when we turn off our iPhone and give undistracted attention to our mate in conversations.

One day ,we sat down and reflected on a list of all the married couples we’ve had as friends over the decades. Of the approximately 126 couples, there was only one divorce! They took seriously their covenant marriage vows and stayed focused on the “small things” that make a difference in a Christian marriage.

Periodically Review Consequences

Some closing counsel I offer every couple committed to glorifying God in their marriage is to periodically review the effects of adulterous activity. This isn’t an exhaustive list but it’s sobering as to what can happen.

1. Possibly lose my wife and children forever through divorce and relocation.
2. Devastate my children and possibly disillusion them to

Christianity for life.

3. Follow in the footsteps of people whose immorality caused them to forfeit their position and reputation.
4. Form memories that could haunt me indefinitely and hinder intimacy indefinitely.
5. Suffer a lifetime of STDs as well as infect my spouse.
6. Cause a pregnancy with personal and financial implications, including a lifelong reminder of my sin.
7. Abort an unborn baby haunting me all the days of my life.
8. Experience longstanding emotional distress, plus sleeplessness, depression and shame.
9. Risk physical harm from a jealous boyfriend or spouse.
10. Grieve God, who so loved the world that He sent His only Son to redeem me and give me eternal life as His gift.

Here's the deal: Now more than ever, we need authentic Christians to model the relationship of Christ and His church in authentic marriages where little things are never taken for granted but focused upon each and every day.