

The Progression and Miracle of 'One Flesh'

Let's travel back in time to the Garden of Eden for a moment. The place in this story I want to visit is after God brings the woman to the man. In Genesis 2:24b, God says, "And they will become one flesh." This statement clearly alludes to God creating something entirely new, the creation of a new flesh from two individuals so they can become this new creation called marriage. He also alludes to the fact that this creation, this masterpiece is not at all instantaneous.

Let's look back to the miracle of a child. When this child is conceived and God breathes his spark of life into this child, it is a miracle. If you have ever had the experience of seeing a sonogram of a child in the womb, you definitely see the miracle as it moves with its little hands and feet, eyes and beating heart. When the child is born, as miraculous as that is, it's just another stage of this amazing progressive miracle called a child. The baby coos and cries and eventually becomes a toddler. Then the miracle continues to grow into a preschooler and a student all the way through high school. Each of these stages is full of developmental tasks, challenges, peers, successes and teachable moments.

This miracle goes on to college or work. They begin to find their way in life. They get married, have a family. You see, the whole lifespan is a miracle from conception until death. A life is a miracle gift from God. This miracle called life is definitely progressive and continues to develop over decades.

Now let's see if becoming one flesh in light of this miracle of marriage is also progressive. The very first idea that comes to my mind when I heard the words "and they will become one flesh" is that whatever this process is, the one thing it is not is instant. Wouldn't it be amazing if the moment the

groom kissed the bride they would instantly become one? I'm not sure what that would look like, but wow, wouldn't that be amazing? Obviously, no one could take that level of transformation instantly.

Actually as far as a lifetime goes, I think it's easily 50 to 75 years until you become fully one flesh. Along the way there are signs of reading each other's minds, understanding your spouse when their words don't make sense and ministering to their needs as they arise. It's here that the process of becoming one flesh is actually happening. This process of becoming one flesh is not easy. Becoming one flesh not only happens over decades but during this process, it's painful. Yelling, silence, long talks, sleeping on the sofa, not feeling understood or appreciated are all a part of it. These moments are manifestations of the progressive miracle we call marriage.

If you have raised a child or teenager, you expect conflict, disagreements, anger, uprisings, repenting and many other sorts of painful experiences. These processes tell you they are alive and growing. How you handle these conflicts is important in parenting as well as in the miracle of your marriage.

You must, however, accept the fact that all human relationships are painful, whether it is the child-parent, student-teacher, employee-employer, brother-sister, friend-friend or husband-wife relationship. In every relationship, there is guaranteed pain.

So if you are in a painful day or season of your marriage, your marriage is alive. Becoming one flesh is painful by design. So when it's happening, rejoice! "Rejoice?" you may ask. Yes, rejoice. It's in my personal and clinical experience of more than 20 years that after these painful events, one or both of you matures, and you actually feel closer to each other. This is the warm and fuzzy feeling after someone dies a

little bit more to themselves, and it's awesome.

The idea of pain being a guarantee in any relationship can bring comfort. Pain is a sign that something is alive, and it needs attention. Pain is normal and healthy in a marriage. If we know it's guaranteed to come, it will be easier to process when it does. {eo}

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