

Here we are in week 3 of “I Believe in You.” Wk 1 was how God believes in US. Last week Mark talked about how we need to believe in each other—and cultivate soul level relationships like Jonathan and David from 1 Samuel 18.

Today we’re talking about how “I Believe in You” plays into marriage. And to get into that I want to talk about words in the English language that have lost their meaning.

Davenport

When I was a kid my grandparents who lived up the road in Peru, used to tell my brother and I not to jump on the davenport. “Seriously? What the heck is a davenport?”
(couch—lost its meaning)

Gay

My friend Greg showed me a newspaper clipping from the 1950s that advertised a band his dad was in. The tag line was,
“*Now appearing daily at the gayest spot in town.*”
(gay—lost its meaning)

Gams

Anyone know what that means? In the 1920s this referred to the attractive legs of a woman. “Hubba-hubba 22-skidoo—check out the gams on that doll!”
(Gams—lost its meaning)

Glad rags

Anyone know what that means? From the 20s-30s, it means dressy clothes. As in,
“*Hey babe why don’t you throw on your glad rags, we’ll hit the town and you can show off those gams.*” ;-)
(Glad rags—lost its meaning)

Land line

(Dying) By the time little ones in the nursery are adults, this term will have gone the way of davenports and glad rags.

Vow

It used to mean, “Sacred and binding.” The word “vow” use to imply,
“I will always believe in you anyway...I will always believe in you regardless.”

Now vow means, “I believe in you IF...I believe in you AS LONG AS...”
Vow is losing its meaning.

Everyone here who’s married or going to be married has said or will say in front of God, our family and friends—a VOW—similar to this:

“I, take you, to be my beloved (wife/husband),
to have and to hold,
to honor, to treasure ,
to be at your side in sorrow and in joy,
in good times, and in bad,
and to love and cherish you always.
I PROMISE you—this is my solemn VOW-- from this day forward, for all the days of my life.”

One of our challenges, is that words like: vow, promise, contract, covenant---are becoming hollow---they do not mean “binding” to us (except for cell phone contracts...).

In our culture, we believe that we can get out of anything we get into.

Even a legal document—get a good lawyer and she’ll show you the loophole.

Or better yet, just walk away—from the house...the bills...the spouse...the obligation....Why? Because words like vow, promise, contract and covenant don’t mean much to us any more.

Here’s why I bring this up:

Our marriage is like a highway that we’re traveling on.

***And if we believe that a vow is something we can easily break---
that creates an off ramp we can easily take.***

Let me share a personal story: I was married for a short time when I was very young, and not clued in about God. It ended in divorce.

A little while later, I meet this wonderful and beautiful person named Sandra. We become amazing friends.

Months later I am giddy because it turns out she’s into me as much as I am into her.

We become sappy in love. We are nauseating to be around. We go so far as to listen to Aaron Neville...

At that point, I know a little more about God, but barely. We have two lovely little babies...that consume our time and zap our energy.

We are no longer nauseating to be around. We have completely forgotten who Aaron Neville is.

These little kids change the dynamic of our heretofore blissful marriage.

We can no longer do what we want when we want.

Sleep...“oh precious sleep” is now our most highly prized commodity.

We get to the place every marriage gets to sooner or later. We have spats. Disagreements. A subtle tension starts to take up residency in our home.

I get this bad twinge in my soul—that feeling you get when you experience something today that’s the exact same feeling as something from your past.

Our sappy beautiful marriage is now hitting speed bumps. I’ve been here before. I worry where this will end up.

In one particular disagreement in front of our house, I say a sentence that will keep us on the marriage highway and keep us from an off ramp—a sentence I’ll repeat in days ahead:

***“I don’t know how to fix this today...but I am not going anywhere.
I don’t know how to solve our problem...but I’m never going to leave. Even though we’re not getting along, I love you.”***

When we understand the true meaning of the word “vow”---that word locks us into a room with our spouse, and throws away the key—forcing us to find a solution—forcing us to find God in it.

And here is a principal that is so ridiculously simple:
("Everything should be made as simple as possible, but no simpler." - Albert Einstein)

**When there is a destination we want to reach;
that means there are places we will refuse to go.**

So if we want to arrive at “happily ever after”—
that means we will not take the exit ramp that says “divorce 5 miles.”
We will not take the exit ramp that says “Someone better, just ahead.”

When Sandra and I started hitting speed bumps in our marriage, we said to each other, that we were committed to each other. Even though there was friction we in essence we said, “I believe in you.”

Here’s the thing---when a word like “vow” ceases to mean “something that we’re tied to...
then there’s always an escape hatch...
then there’s always an off ramp...
then there’s always another person to be attracted to....

Unless “vow” means “binding” to us--- when things get tough (and they WILL), we won’t be able to say to our spouse, “I believe in you.”

If we think our vow is something we can easily get out of,
instead of thinking “I believe in you”---
we’ll think, “I’m not sure about you.”
And “I’m not sure about you” is the thought that happens before we choose to take the next off ramp.

When there is a destination we want to reach; that means there are places we will refuse to go.

Words always change. God’s principles never change. God’s expectation for his people to take our vows seriously-- has not changed in thousands of years.

Now is the time to reclaim the meaning of the word “vow” so that it too doesn’t go the way of gams and glad rags.

Vow means, “Sacred and binding.” It translates, “I do and will believe in you anyway...I do and will believe in you no matter what...”

* * * * *

Here’s another word that’s lost its meaning: **Love.**

Let’s look at the true meaning of love.

Watch what God does, and then you do it, like children who learn proper behavior from their parents. Mostly what God does is love you. Keep company with him and learn a life of love. Observe how Christ loved us. His love was not cautious but extravagant. He didn't love in order to get something from us but to give everything of himself to us. Love like that.

Ephesians 5:1-2 The Message

Look at this sentence:

(PP11) “His love (for us) was not cautious but extravagant.”

God is showing us in this passage what love is and what it looks like. And God says Christ's love for us is EXTRAVAGANT. That means:

Exceeding—going past the limits of reason and necessity...
Lacking in moderation or restraint...
Extremely or excessively elaborate...
Spending more than necessary...

What a convicting statement. I wish I could say I love extravagantly. But I am convicted by the word "cautious."

Marriages are funny things...when we first get together we ARE extravagant! But somehow over time, our extravagant love becomes something we cautiously dispense.

It's so easy to fall into the trap dispensing love carefully--like it's something we have very little of, something we should guard as if we don't have an infinite supply of it.

But Paul says (on behalf of God)—our love should be extravagant.

Maybe for some of us today, this is the whole talk---that we need to walk out of here wondering why in the world we've been cautious and held back on our love for the ONE person we vowed to spend the rest of our life with.

And check this: the difference between cautious love and extravagant love, is a choice.

And look at this:

He didn't love in order to get something from us but to give everything of himself to us. Love like that.

God's definition of love?: it's what we GIVE.

If your marriage is not what you want it to be—if your spouse isn't who you think they should be---start here: GIVE love.

I want to take a timeout to give us time to meditate on this passage

"His love was not cautious but extravagant. He didn't love in order to get something from us but to give everything of himself to us. Love like that."

Ephesians 5:2 The Message

Joshua 1:8 says we should **"meditate on Scripture day and night."**

Meditating on Scripture is simply focusing on it, thinking about it, trying to impress God's Word upon our mind and soul. You might read the passage several times. You might just dwell on a couple words that jump out at you...

(((((((((((meditate on verse))))))))))))

We just meditated on how God defines love and how He expects us to love. Contrast Ephesians 5:2 with this false definition of love:

“Love is something that I fall into or out of. I have no control of it. The feeling of love drives my behavior. If I don’t feel love, then there’s no hope for my marriage. People who are in love found their soul mate. If I don’t feel love, I must not be with the right person.”

-Satan

To believe in our spouse, we have to love like God does in Ephesians 5:2—which is to give everything of ourselves to our spouse. God never speaks of following our heart as we fall in or out of love. In fact, He WARNS us about following our heart!:

*“The human heart is the most deceitful of all things,
and desperately wicked.*

Who really knows how bad it is?

¹⁰ *But I, the LORD, search all hearts
and examine secret motives.*

*I give all people their due rewards,
according to what their actions deserve.”*

Jeremiah 17:9-10 NLT

Listen to me. God defines love as **what we do**.
The world defines love by **what we feel**.

This room (city, county, state, country) is riddled with the shards of divorce because of the love someone didn’t feel for their spouse versus the feelings of love for someone outside the marriage.

Too much divorce is the by-product of defining love by feelings.

Committed loving marriages are the by-product of loving like Ephesians 5:2

And let’s take this a step further—loving actions, stoke a loving heart.
When we choose loving actions, we cultivate the emotion of love.

Don’t believe me? I’ll just read the first few sentences of *Song of Songs* in the Old Testament:

“Kiss me again and again, for your love is sweeter than wine. How fragrant your cologne, and how pleasing your name! No wonder all the young women love you! Take me with you. Come, let’s run! Bring me into your bedroom, O my king.”

Song of Songs 1:1-4 NLT

Song of Songs is (a lot of things—if you’ve never read it—PLEASE DO!)

ONE of the things it is, is a picture of the kind of passion we would all like to see in our marriage. And the passionate love of *Song of Songs*, sits upon the foundational love of Ephesians 5:2

“His love was not cautious but extravagant. He didn’t love in order to get something from us but to give everything of himself to us. Love like that.”

Ephesians 5:2 The Message

Something we need to understand about love—is that throughout the Bible our example of how husbands and wives should love each other is demonstrated by the imagery of how God loves us.

Song of Songs is BOTH—a graphic picture of love between husband and wife AND a picture of God’s love for US. (Difficult concept for guys)

And in this passage from Ephesians 5—the one we hear at most weddings—God compares how husbands and wives love each other with how Christ loves us.

²¹Out of respect for Christ, be courteously reverent to one another.

²²⁻²⁴Wives, understand and support your husbands in ways that show your support for Christ. The husband provides leadership to his wife the way Christ does to his church, not by domineering but by cherishing. So just as the church submits to Christ as he exercises such leadership, wives should likewise submit to their husbands.

((tons of bad behavior have resulted by bad interpretation of this passage))

²⁵⁻²⁸Husbands, go all out in your love for your wives, exactly as Christ did for the church—a love marked by giving, not getting. Christ's love makes the church whole. His words evoke her beauty. Everything he does and says is designed to bring the best out of her, dressing her in dazzling white silk, radiant with holiness. And that is how husbands ought to love their wives. They're really doing themselves a favor—since they're already "one" in marriage.

Ephesians 5:21-28 The Message

God is saying to us in this passage, "Believe in each other—just as I have believed in YOU."

In the Bible, God has put together how He loves us- AND – how spouses are to love each other. So that means we need BOTH together—each spouse needs an authentic loving relationship with Jesus Christ.

("L" analogy—need the vertical w/God...the horizontal w/our spouse...forms an "L" which stands for Love. To truly love the way God describes it, we need them both.)

(Encourage marriages...)

(Special story)