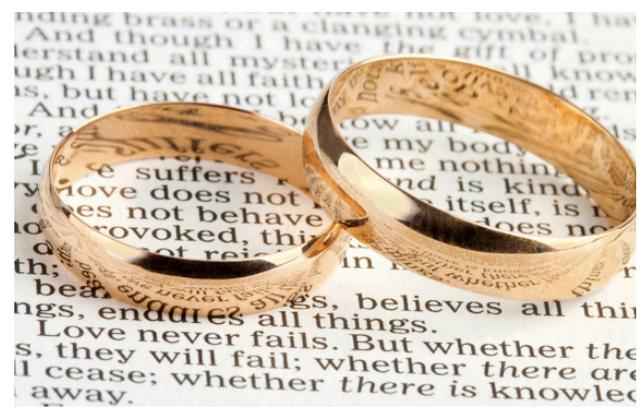


**Let's Go Deeper**  
**Wednesday, July 19, 2017**  
**David Shirey**



Summer is a season of weddings and wedding anniversaries. On Sunday, Pastor Elizabeth announced Dale and Pete Moore celebrated 60 years on July 11. Luanne and Jim Franklin will celebrate their 40<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary on July 31.

Dee Walker and William Mason began their first year of marriage last Friday. Theirs is a holy matrimony. Having officiated the ceremony, I witnessed it myself.

The music was the finest I've ever heard at a wedding, bar none. More than a dozen of Will and Dee's classmates from the UK School of Music sang a repertoire of sacred music that was absolutely gorgeous. Three selections were Scripture verses set to four-part harmony from the Psalms, Song of Solomon, and the Book of Ruth. Some of the pieces were done *a capella*. Some were accompanied by Michael Rintamaa. All were exquisite. And reverent.

At Will and Dee's request, communion followed the rings and the lighting of the Unity Candle. Note the etymology of the word: the prefix *com* (meaning "with") followed by the noun *union*. *Com + union = union with*. Their first desire in marriage was to celebrate their "union with" one another and with God. I served Will and Dee. They served the wedding party. Ushers served the congregation.

I offered the following homily during the service:

When I was a young pastor and a couple asked me to marry them, I used to size up their suitability for marriage by asking three questions:

- Are these two in love?
- Are they compatible?
- Are they legal?

If they cooed and giggled and blushed adoringly at each other, I'd check off *in love*. If they could name a shared hobby, I'd check off *compatible*. If they could show me a marriage license, I'd say *legal* and off to the altar we'd go.

But now that I'm older and wiser, I know that whereas falling in love, being compatible, and being legal may have something to do with *getting* people married, they have little to do with *keeping* people married.

So, I don't ask anymore "Are they in love, compatible, and legal?" I now ask three different questions that better predict an enduring marriage.

I ask, *Are these two trustworthy?* The foundation of a Christian marriage isn't the marriage license upon which two people sign their names, but the covenant of marriage to which two people give their word. Covenant means promise. Hence, the key questions to ask of a potential mate is, "Can he keep a promise? Is he a man of his word?" Marriage isn't based on a crush, but a commitment. Have you ever noticed the traditional marriage vows in their

time-honored wisdom don't ask, "Do you love him/her?" They ask "Will you love him/her?" There's a huge difference. The question "Do you love..." treats love as a feeling. But feelings ebb and flow. You can't build a lasting relationship on how you happen to *feel* about someone at any given time. That's why instead of asking, "Do you love?" the vows ask, "Will you love?" Meaning true love is an act of the will. It's something we promise to do even when-- *especially when*-- we don't feel like it: "For better or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish as long as we both shall live." "Will you love?" means will you seek the other's good when you feel like it and when you don't. Which is why I suggest one predictor of a lasting relationship is trustworthiness.

I've also come to ask, *Are these two selfless?* Are they capable of putting the other's needs and well-being before their own? The old saw about "meeting each other halfway" just doesn't hack it. If you meet each other halfway in your marriage, you're joined at the fingertips. Good luck with that weak a connection! But, if both persons will go way past halfway, giving much more than they take, their grasp will be firm and the bond of their relationship will be secure. Selflessness is a key to an enduring marriage.

The third question I ask is *Are these two faithful?* Is their union founded upon the Rock that will not move, the God whose love is trustworthy, whose Son's selfless love was poured out for all the earth? The strongest geometric shape is a triangle. In marriage, that means two spouses leaning on each other, both of them standing upon the firm foundation who is Almighty God.

This is all to say, Will and Dee, that years ago I used to measure a couple's fitness for marriage by whether they were in love, compatible, and legal, but now I believe two are fit for marriage by other criteria. Namely, are they trustworthy, selfless, and faithful?

I hasten to add this: there are many persons who believe that for God and Christ's Church to bless a marriage, the criteria for that divine blessing requires spouses of opposite genders.

I am of a faith and a church that begs to differ. I believe that God's blessing upon a marriage is not restricted to specific genders, but rather is lavished upon a specific kind of love. That is, if two human beings who are created in the image of God, redeemed by Jesus Christ, and enlivened by the Holy Spirit love one another in a way that is marked by fidelity, mutuality, and intimacy, trustworthiness, selflessness, and faithfulness, then God's blessing surely rests upon such a union.

Such is your love for each other Demetrius and William.

May God's blessing rest upon you both today and always.

And may God's blessing rest upon all of you whose relationships are marked by fidelity, mutuality, and intimacy, trustworthiness, selflessness, and faithfulness.