

MARRIAGE OF TAYLOR SIMONE DRAIN AND JACOB MATTHEW PHELPS (OCTOBER 10, 2015)

We will begin this meeting of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, with a spirit of great thanksgiving to our King for providing us with an opportunity to consider the imminent marriage supper of the Lamb -- between Christ and His Bride the church -- through the marriage of two of our members, Taylor Simone Drain and Jacob Matthew Phelps. Dear friends, this body of believers love each of you with great affection, because we have cause to believe that we will spend an eternity with you in grateful service to our God in His Kingdom.

Having been asked to conduct this matter, it became my most solemn duty to examine the proper manner in which this most important event is to be conducted, in accordance with Holy Scripture; and very importantly not in accordance with the traditions of men. You two are reputed among this body and indeed before the whole of this generation to be walking orderly in service to God, and are neither bound to another man or woman according to scripture.

After having searched the Scripture I proffered, and you have each heartily agreed to, vows that will be made and entered into, from the light of your Scriptural duties to each other as husband and wife. Accordingly, Jacob Matthew Phelps, please take the ring that you have brought and place it upon Taylor Simone Drain's finger while I recite the vows you are hereby taking with her as your wife:

"Do you, Jacob Matthew Phelps, take this woman, Taylor Simone Drain, to be your lawfully and scripturally wedded wife; to love her above every other creature, to give honor unto her as unto the weaker vessel, to have your heart wholly trust in her; to daily edify her in Scripture; to provide for her temporal good; to hold her in no bitterness, do her no cruelty, and deal not treacherously with her, but rather to conceal all her faults, failings, and infirmities; and keep yourself only to her as being heirs together of the grace of life, until that day comes that Christ returns or that God sees fit to separate you from her in death?"

Now Taylor Simone Drain, please take the ring that you have brought and place it upon Jacob Matthew Phelps' finger while I recite the vows you are hereby taking with him as your husband:

"Do you, Taylor Simone Drain, take this man, Jacob Matthew Phelps, to be your lawfully and scripturally wedded husband; to love him above every other creature; obey him as the head of the house, even as Christ is the head of the Church; adorn yourself with the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, being in subjection to him in the Lord; to hold him in no bitterness, do him no cruelty, that you be not afraid with any amazement of wicked men; and keep yourself only to him as being heirs together of the grace of life, until that day comes that Christ returns or that God sees fit to separate you from him in death?"

Then, inasmuch as you have entered into this covenant of marriage before God and the membership of this church, I hereby exercise the authority as an Elder with the Westboro Baptist Church and declare you husband and wife.

"Wherefore [you] are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." (Matthew 19:6)

If you two sweet lambs will take a seat, I will offer a prayer of thanksgiving and ask for the Lord's blessing and grace on us all. After which, Stephen Ralph Drain will offer words of exhortation on this blessed occasion.

**Sermon delivered to the Saints of God which are at Topeka on the occasion of the marriage of
Jacob Matthew and Taylor Simone – Saturday, October 10, 2015**

In our outward ministry, we often boil down the Scriptural definition of marriage into a pithy phrase that will fit onto a sign or a tweet in order to preach to this generation of foolish and wicked men - this *sound-byte generation*: 1 man; one woman; for life. It does the work – in an age when this bedrock concept of Christian truth has been trampled upon, mocked and torn to shreds by a people who are filled with every wickedness and who violently oppose every blessed standard of God that does not satisfy their lusts and craven motives – and so therefore all of them. We are bound to these stubborn concepts, by God’s grace and through nothing we have and are in ourselves, and so we thank God on this day and give him all glory for breaking and humbling our hearts. We delight in these concepts and words – the stubbornness of them – the solidity: a plumb line hanging still, from any beam, will always hang straight. Not a little off to the side – but straight. And to this blessed scriptural concept of marriage, we add the important characteristic – at the front side of this union: that a person who is bound in the love of God and who claims to walk in the reverent fear of him, bear the yoke of Christ comfortably together with a spouse of like faith. Consider the scripture:

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? - 2Cor. 6:14

The broader context of these words given by the Holy Spirit through Paul seems dissuasive, in general, from having any fellowship with unbelievers in anything sinful and criminal, whether in worship or in conversation. So whittled down to the context of the marriage union, at the front side of things, a godly man has no business thinking to take to his breast a woman who demonstrates no fear of the Lord, nor should a God-fearing woman think to devote herself to a worldly man.

Imagine two oxen joined together at the neck by a wooden crosspiece so they can pull a plow. They are two animals of the same species, joined together to accomplish a certain job. They’ve been trained to respond to the farmer’s voice, and they’re considered a team once they are joined together by the yoke. A wise farmer will pick two animals that work well together, that have about equal strength, and make a good team. But an ox and an ass will not comfortably bear that yoke together, nor will they do the job with any efficiency or effectiveness.

The scripture makes clear provision for how a person who becomes blessed with a fear of the Lord after that marriage union takes place should operate and behave in that union going forward (in the case where neither spouse was called of God prior to that union that he nevertheless made appropriate provision for and therefore approved), *and* how a believing spouse should look at and treat a spouse who may have shown signs of grace at the time of the union, but who may have backslidden since or

now shows no signs of grace at all. But the scripture is clear – that on the front side of things, it is a very bad idea to think to marry a person who is unequally yoked with his or her spirit. Consider the words of the prophet Nehemiah in scripture:

In those days also saw I Jews that had married wives of Ashdod, of Ammon, and of Moab; and their children spake half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the language of each people. And I contended with them, and cursed them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair, and made them swear by God, saying, ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, nor take their daughters unto your sons, or for yourselves. Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? Yet among many nations was there no king like him, who was beloved of his God, and God made him king over all Israel: nevertheless even him did outlandish women cause to sin. – Ne. 13:23-26

What a mess.

The Lord gives us clear bounds of this blessed union, and all people would do well to heed such blessed guidance. But most people attempt to define marriage however they want, walking in the very dim light of their own sparks in order that they may satisfy every lust – and they vainly, foolishly claw, scratch, legislate and market toward the end of breaking the bands of God's word from them and casting those cords far from them. It is a vexing, vain thing that they do - all around us. Many, many of the world's ills are bound up in unholy constructions of the marriage union. And the occasion of a proper marriage is a wonderful time to remind ourselves, and every man in the world, of such folly. So no other union, other than a man, joined to his wife, as long as they both shall live, is ever recognized as honorable and undefiled. All The edicts of kings, all the lockstep manifold screams of violent perverts, all the savvy marketing of world-beloved celebrities, and all the folksy, grass roots hypocrisy of county clerks cannot and will not ever change God's view of the matter.

So – NO DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE!

But I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery. – Matt. 5:32

The so-called 'Christian' churches are filled to the brim with this kind of perversion. They wipe their mouths, as if they had no sin – this tremendous violence done against that marriage covenant, and the tremendous violence done in the hearts and minds of people.

Barnes commentary, opening up Eph. 5:33 to the reader, speaks to this issue: *We may see, then, the guilt of those husbands who withhold their affections from their wives, and forsake those to whom they had solemnly pledged themselves at the altar; those who neglect to provide for their wants, or to minister to them in sickness; and those who become the victims of intemperance, and leave their wives to tears.*

There is much, much guilt of this kind on earth. There are many, many broken vows. There are many, many hearts made to bleed. There is many a pure and virtuous woman, who was once the object of tender affection, now, by no fault of hers, forsaken, abused, broken-hearted, by the brutal conduct of a husband.

Consider the scripture:

Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. – Mal. 2:14

NO SO-CALLED ‘SAME-SEX’ MARRIAGE! Consider the scripture:

Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination. – Lev. 18:22

If a man lying with a man is abomination in the eyes of God, then how in the world can they be married in the eyes of God? Definitions get in the way. Words are stubborn things. And no cute end-around by the dykes. Consider the scripture:

For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. – Rom. 1:26, 27

Same concept applies to all of it. It is vile. Unseemly. Unnatural.

NO POLYGAMY! (Or polyandry, which is the woman being ‘married’ to more than one man)

And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. – Matt. 19:4-6

‘They twain’ means ‘those two’. Those two. Two.

But what two men, or two women, or a man that now wants to be looked upon as a woman (but who is still a man, even with the dress and breasts and eyelashes) and a man, or two women and a llama, or the New Zealand Falcons gay rugby club and an ostrich do – is ALWAYS DEFILED. God never blesses any such perverse unions with the stamp of ‘honorable,’ and will always judge all such perverse unions as rebellious, dishonorable, abominable and vile. It is fruitless to even ponder privately, for the briefest of moments, whether such things should or could ever be right in the sight of God – but it is absolutely satanic, to the nth degree, to publicly demand God’s acceptance and therefore expeditiously force social acceptance upon that which God has forever put down as wholly unacceptable. Or what is equally

perverse – to maintain that God’s view of the matter is irrelevant. And that’s what people do every time they say or imply: “It’s just a book – written by men – and I’ll live how I want to.” None of what the world does, under the heading of ‘marriage,’ other than a man and a woman, each of whom having never been married before, is marriage - from God’s holy perspective.

And the reason for this proper construction of marriage is clear – that the marriage of a man to his wife is a type of the relationship of Christ and his bride, the church – and that bride, the church, while she waits and prepares herself, should properly be wholly given to her devotion to that righteous bridegroom, Christ. And Christ’s whole affection and desire is given to the time of that union with his betrothed. He is faithful, not ever dealing treacherously with her. That’s the beauty of it. Though she be dark (Song of Songs 1:4), she is comely to him and she is his only bride. It is a type – which means the antitype, or thing itself, has not come – and at such time as it comes - that blessed marriage supper - all types are done away with; for there are no dimly-lit reminders needed of what is represented when in the presence and reality of the Bridegroom’s arrival to take his bride. All other unholy unions that the world dubs as ‘marriages’ do not typify this great mystery, and are therefore not marriages in the eyes of God. Bet the farm on that.

And this type is vital – it is of the utmost importance to get right. A proper marriage, being a type, is a great blessing, and we celebrate such a thing – praising God in thanksgiving. In worldly society, however, marriage has been long championed as a state of being well above or more desirous than that of celibacy, or remaining a virgin – or making oneself a eunuch, for the kingdom of God’s sake. But the Bible does not support that notion at all. Consider the scripture:

And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery. His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry. But he said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given. For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother’s womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it. – Matt. 19:9-12

Matthew Henry offers this exposition in part: *that they who have the gift of continence, and are not under any necessity of marrying, do best if they continue single (1 Co. 7:1); for they that are unmarried have opportunity, if they have but a heart, to care more for the things of the Lord, how they may please the Lord (1 Co. 7:32–34). being less encumbered with the cares of this life, and having a greater vacancy of thought and time to mind better things. The increase of grace is better than the increase of the family, and fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ is to be preferred before any other fellowship.*

And:

Neither let the son of the stranger, that hath joined himself to the LORD, speak, saying, The LORD hath utterly separated me from his people: neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I am a dry tree. For thus saith the LORD unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant; Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off. – Isa. 56:3-5

And:

Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful. I suppose therefore that this is good for the present distress, I say, that it is good for a man so to be. Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife. But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you. But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away. But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife. There is difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband. And this I speak for your own profit; not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is comely, and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction. But if any man think that he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virgin, if she pass the flower of her age, and need so require, let him do what he will, he sinneth not: let them marry. Nevertheless he that standeth stedfast in his heart, having no necessity, but hath power over his own will, and hath so decreed in his heart that he will keep his virgin, doeth well. So then he that giveth her in marriage doeth well; but he that giveth her not in marriage doeth better. – 1Cor. 7:25-38

Now there is a range of exposition concerning what ‘this present distress’ speaks to specifically – some true Bible scholars speak of the events, or ‘beginnings of sorrows’ that signal the coming of the Lord in Mark 13; others of the hard, pressing persecutions that, at that time, befell the Christians of the early church; and still others of the imminent destruction of Jerusalem (that was to take place in 70 A.D.) that would be no doubt as devastating to the Christian converts among the Jews as to the unregenerate Jews. But it is clear that this piece of scripture, and others, speak to the separate spiritual merits of the two mentioned states of living, and to the notion that tending to the things of the Lord should properly take preeminence in the minds and hearts of all god-fearing people – so there is real danger in placing too

many other obstacles in doing so, as to time, attention or focus – whether actual or constructed – upon the mind or heart.

Jacob, Taylor, the Lord has blessed this union, and now you are married in the sight of the King. There are many, many things to learn about *how* to be married - how to live in that union in a way that is pleasing unto God. So first, keep in mind that this is a life-long mission, as the rest of us who are in this state of being are daily being taught by the Father of Lights and by his sending forth each and every member in this body, in a timely manner and with words fitly framed, to enlighten us each and all about deep spiritual things that were previously dark to our consciences. Second, there is a wealth of practical wisdom available in this body, both by way of years of study and experience, and by the teachings and backside wisdom of each of our failures and shame on this blessed subject.

For my part, as I prepared for this sermon and looked at as many different scriptural perspectives, overviews, dissections, angles and sub-topics on the proper scriptural construction and carrying out of marriage, two main notions struck me *hard*. First, that my own failings as a proper husband to my beautiful, kind, industrious, loving wife of now over 30 years is a source of great sorrow to me. As I pondered these things, these scriptural notions of marriage, I was hit hard at how often I, in my pride, selfishness, flesh, and deceptive rationalizations concerning all of the other things I try to get done, have failed to consistently cleave - minute by minute, day by day - to the business of God's plenteous, merciful, wise words about how to be a proper husband and how to always look at my wife how God commands all married men to do. It is said that failure in experience is a great teacher, and I am grateful to God for granting me the mercy of showing me these things in my life, and granting me that great gift of repentance, that I may look upon her more perfectly. That my words and deeds, down to fascial micro-expressions might not ever belie that humility and sight – becoming more pleasing to her and therefore pleasing God in the lot he has so graciously given me. The authority given in marriage to the husband is nearly always misconstrued and miscarried along the road somewhere, the flesh being sowed to, sometimes in mere moments at a time, all the way to big chunks of one's lifetime - and I humbly yet zealously exhort all my brothers who are husbands, spurred on by the events of this day, and the general love and enthusiasm which widens in our members as we wait in hopeful anticipation for our coming King, to dive - head first - into the subject of Christian marriage and the scriptural duties of husbands and wives: and to help your precious, God-fearing wives do the same. I would like to thank brother Brent for his work on preparing a document, which he labored on some time ago, that neatly conglomerates several expositors in one place on many verses that are germane to the topic. I highly recommend that you each use that as good source material for your revisiting the subject of marriage. I also highly recommend adding to that document when one of you finds another good, sound thing to put in it. It is very good to be reminded of details, and that we don't define concepts for ourselves; thereby thinking

in our self-assured pride that we already know what there is to know on these serious matters, and become hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

Second, as I considered these things relating to marriage, I became more aware that nestled therein there is much to be learned by way of the treatment of all the saints – the important nuances of forbearance, of mercy, of patience, of longsuffering, of meekness, of lovingkindness, of ministration, of humility – of love for God in our performance of all things. Much of what we do, we do with, to and for (and hopefully not against) each other, and these are things that we have so much more to learn about and to put into practice. Consider the scripture:

And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. – Col. 3:23,24

Now I know that you two have been reading a lot together, preparing for this marriage, and I know that you have gone through resources like brother Brent’s ‘Husbands and Wives – Marriage’ document, as well as Gill’s *Practical Divinity* on the subject – and that you’ve even sought counsel from married people by going around visiting with them. And I am grateful to all of you who have, and who will, help these two darlings out. But I don’t believe it is possible, if we were to be here for weeks, to meaningfully go through and properly digest everything that a person needs to know and tend to as it relates to marriage. But if you are sincere in seeking the Lord on these things, and you don’t just ignore or justify your missteps, he will help you and show you things as you go along. And while there is an abundance of scripture to look to as practical guidance, I would like to focus in on just a few passages by way of giving you a kind of leaping off place on this blessed day.

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. – Eph. 5:22

Gill writes, in part, on this verse: *They should think well of their husbands, speak becomingly to them, and respectfully of them. The wife should take care of the family according to the husband’s will. She should imitate him in what is good, and bear with that which is not so agreeable. She should help and assist in caring and providing for the family; and should abide with him in prosperity and adversity, and do nothing without his will and consent. This subjection is only to her husband; not to any other man. She should show a regard to his precepts; or as in the sight of the Lord, and so yielding it sincerely and heartily; or in things pertaining to the Lord, which are consistent with the law of the Lord, and the Gospel of Christ; and in like manner as the church is subject to Christ, her Lord and husband.*

Barnes: *It is not best that there should be the open exercise of authority in a family. When commands begin in the relation of husband and wife, happiness flies; and the moment a husband is disposed to COMMAND his wife, or is under a necessity of doing it - that moment he may bid adieu to domestic peace and joy. A wife, therefore, should never give her husband occasion to command her to do anything, or to*

forbid anything. His known wish, except in cases of conscience, should be law to her. The moment she can ascertain what his will is, that moment ought to settle her mind as to what is to be done.

This isn't a conditional. You don't get to say you'll do better if he'll do better. You have that job to do and you don't get to lay it off by degree on how well you perceive him to be doing. Don't flyspeck or manipulate him. Understand and make a wide berth for the idea that he bears responsibility and is therefore answerable for the authority God has placed upon him concerning the union. Every word of this is sound, Bible exposition. Not just in the letter of the law, but in spirit.

Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.
– 1Pet. 3:1-7

This means, Jacob, that you have the non-delegable duty of becoming a Bible scholar: a *bona fide* Bible scholar. Not just quoting chapter and verse, but digging in there, calling upon the Lord, and finding out what scriptural notions properly mean – and then dwell with her according to *that*. Matthew Henry states of this: *not according to lust, as brutes; nor according to passion (or pride), as devils; but according to knowledge, as wise and sober men, who know the word of God and their own duty.* It's good for you to get around and read with others, but you've got to read with her. Topically. Tirelessly. Comfortably. And when you come upon notions that you can't nail down – you have to *get* them nailed down, and then take the best light you can get back to her.

You have to give honor unto her, as unto the weaker vessel. That concept of the weaker vessel, I fear, is a place where many men tend to stumble. The word 'weaker' is used there, not 'weak.' The latter tends to imply more strength in the counterpart. Using 'weaker' implies a relative weakness, thereby admitting your own weakness.

JFB suggests here that a man ought to be sensible *"of his own weakness, and that she, like himself, is God's vessel and fabric, (and recognizing this) ought to lead him to act with tender and wise consideration towards her who is the weaker fabric), giving (literally, 'assigning,' 'apportioning')* honor as being also *(besides being man and wife) heirs together."*

And you have to do this all, keeping in mind that you are joint heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered; which implies that your prayers may be hindered if you don't do these things. Gill states here: *as they (prayers) would be were they not to dwell together; or should not the husband give honour to his wife, and take care of her as he ought to do: hence would arise strifes and quarrels, when they could not cordially, and to edification, join together in prayer; nor would such prayers, put up in wrath, be acceptable unto God, who requires that men should lift up holy hands everywhere, whether in public, or in private, in God's house, or in their own houses, without wrath and*

doubting. From hence we may observe, that family prayer is a duty incumbent on professors of religion, and great care should be taken that it be not neglected and hindered.

For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. – Eph. 5:23

The ‘savior’ of the body. While our literal salvation is of the Lamb alone – you being the savior of that body means that you are supposed to do everything you can to protect and insulate your wife from pain, injury, heartache, grief (much of it preventable in that, without awareness, a husband can be the main source of the pain, injury, heartache and grief), and to provide for her in all meaningful ways possible – not just temporal, but spiritual. Her well-being is of utmost value to you – above all other people and pursuits.

Barnes: The idea here seems to be, that as Christ gave himself to save his body, the church; as he practiced self-denial, and made it an object of intense solicitude to preserve that church, so ought the husband to manifest a similar solicitude to make his wife happy, and to save her from want, affliction, and pain. He ought to regard himself as her natural protector; as bound to anticipate and provide for her wants; as under obligation to comfort her in trial, even as Christ does the church. What a beautiful illustration of the spirit which a husband should manifest is the care which Christ has shown for his "bride," the church.

A big part of that is communication. Asking her questions – not discounting her views – helping her see scriptural soundness in all policies that you put in place – and above all, letting her know how it is with you and that she pleases you. The strong silent type has no place, I’m afraid, in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. You will have to become an expert communicator, up and down both sides of the street. And as the savior in terms of protection and comfort, you will need to grow a big antenna on the top of your head that gets the very best reception at WTAY radio. I have heard several people state how similar that the two of you are – two peas in a pod. You are both very kind, thoughtful, soft-spoken, featherless bipeds who like coffee and Mumford and Sons, but based upon what I know of you two, when you get down into the finer operations of mind, I think the similarities start to fade a bit there – and that is absolutely fine. The Lord will give you what you need to know one another, and to be proper help to each other. You will no doubt have a wonderful, puzzling, loving time figuring out how each other thinks – and that is important work. Just always keep in mind that the most important trait you share is a love and reverent fear of your Creator and Saviour. And when you keep that in mind, you will see through that filter that important notion of knowing each other so well that you know every button that can be pushed, specifically so that you can purposefully NOT push those buttons. When my children are young and they did something wrong, they might come with the proverbial: “I didn’t mean to.” Very shortly thereafter they learn the important difference, that is as wide as a chasm, between “not meaning to” (it was accidental and mindless that I did wrong) and “meaning not to” (it was purposeful and mindful that I avoided doing wrong).

Here is a solid little nugget from Barnes that I think might help both of you: it is very helpful and comforting to a 'problem-solving,' 'bottom-line,' kind of a mind like mine that nevertheless sometimes gets caught up in seemingly infinite possibilities:

To secure mutual love, therefore, it is necessary that there should be mutual kindness, and mutual loveliness of character. Whatever is seen to be offensive or painful should be at once abandoned. All the little peculiarities of temper and modes of speech that are observed to give pain should be forsaken; and while one party should endeavour to tolerate them, and not to be offended, the other should make it a matter of conscience to remove them...The great secret of conjugal happiness is in the cultivation of a proper temper. It is not so much in the great and trying scenes of life that the strength of virtue is tested; it is in the events that are constantly occurring; the manifestation of kindness in the things that are happening every moment; the gentleness that flows along every day, like the stream that winds through the meadow and around the farm-house, noiseless but useful, diffusing fertility by day and by night. Great deeds rarely occur. The happiness of life depends little on them, but mainly on the little acts of (godly) kindness in life. We need them everywhere; we need them always. And eminently in the marriage relation there is need of gentleness and love, returning each morning, beaming in the eye, and dwelling in the heart through the livelong day.

So both of you, nay all of us – please consider this blessed passage of scripture in all that you do – it is of the utmost meaning and importance to all of us. It is our lives as a body – a bride – waiting upon and preparing to meet our Bridegroom:

Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. – Eph. 5:21-32

I'm very grateful to been allowed the opportunity to give words at this occasion - I thank God and you all for it. I hope that something said here today will be useful to you as we sojourn here together in fear and trembling.

I love you all. Amen.