

**A Witness to Christian Marriage  
at the wedding of Granger Smith and Stephanie Adams  
Saturday, May 19, 2013, Pastor Phil Thrailkill**

Gender is God's idea and creation. A pair and the bond of love and respect that grows between them, as Adam and Eve long ago, as Granger and Stephanie today as the work of creation continues. Two who are equal and complementary at every level because they each bear God's image in their gendered bodies and have the possibility of fertility and fruitfulness. They are each designed to know God as the primary relationship of life and to know one another with a level of intimacy that belongs to them alone. Marriage is God's ordering of our needs and passions by channeling them into an exclusive relationship for the good of all. Where marriage is honored, cultures are healthy, and where it is neglected, everything declines, as we now see.

Good marriages have a kind of wall around them, a space reserved for two, but also several gates through which to admit family and friends and all that is good in the world. Marriage is God's art work, which is why at a turning point in today's service we will announce a solemn warning from the teaching of Jesus, "Those whom God has joined, let no one put asunder," and that is because the creator of marriage is also its defender against any who seek to undermine or redefine it. Today you enter a creation reality and public institution designed by God, and you must protect it.

Granger and Stephanie, as of today you must treasure this relationship and uphold the marriages of others. Keeping marriage honorable and healthy in the public square is now one of your duties. Speak well of it and each other. A man or wife who brags on their spouse will be envied for all the right reasons. When you hear of infidelity, it should break your heart and anger you because of the treason of it. When you see couples showing disrespect for each other, you should pray, "Open their eyes, Lord, to the thing they are destroying." As of today you are no longer *singles* as your wedding bands testify; with a glance at your left hand others will know you are taken. Keep your flirting for each other only.

Now because we tend to rush by the words and miss their intent, I remind you, and all who are married, that as of today you publicly sever all former romantic relationships and refuse to turn to them in mind or heart with a big *What if?* It's why, just a few minutes ago, you were each asked a question which ended with the phrase, "*and forsaking all others*, be faithful to one another as long as you both shall live?" Why ask that? Because you cannot be faithful with a divided heart. Never look back

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with a *What if?* It's nothing but a road to pain. Your future is together.

Recent research helps us understand the glue God uses to form what is designed to be a permanent bond so that, as Genesis puts it, *two become one flesh*, and here Stephanie has the edge because of her knowledge of chemistry and pharmacology. The good news, Granger, is that it works even if you don't know the inner workings of dopamine for good feelings and of oxytocin and vasopressin as the male and female monogamy hormones. So let the glue work. Especially the first year, cut back your social calendar and do not starve your relationship of the unhurried time it needs. Carve out some lazy days. Keep your friends, but do not think of a night out with the boys or girls as the goal of your week. Don't let something as stupid as video games and TV rob you of the time to open your hearts and thoughts to each other. It's OK to say, "We are married now, and we are putting each other first." You will be respected for such clarity, and your friends may wonder, "How could I find someone to love me that much?" Love and passion are the fire of marriage, but character and faith are its foundation, which is why Paul was so clear that love requires the virtues of patience and kindness and courtesy and deference and a love of the truth. You will shape each other, and if it is the right kind of shaping, you will join God in building something resilient and good and holy: a true marriage with the love of Christ as its secure center. And after your honeymoon, I expect to see you both on Sunday mornings. No excuses. Stephanie is only newly baptized, and it is your job, Granger, as a Christian husband, to lead your new family in worship and service. It's time to *man-up* and put away childish ways. To ask her to kneel with you at your bedside and hear your pray will give her great security.

In our first pre-marital counseling session I admit to something sneaky. I performed a diagnostic test on the bond between Stephanie and Granger. I handed Stephanie a pen and asked her to imagine it was a microphone. I then said, "Tell me and our TV audience the story of your romance." I always let the women go first because they are typically more verbal. As she told of their first meeting and what later developed you could feel something in room. It was wonder. It was delight. She reached out for his hand as memories flooded back with a smile. And then, when she finished, I required the same of Prince Charming, but not before reminding him that *Ditto* was not a response. When they finished, I thought to myself, "I think this one has potential." So Granger and Stephanie, keep telling your story, especially about the day you stood before God and everyone you loved to take these amazing promises. Renew your vows at home and at every wedding you attend. Love God, follow Jesus Christ in his church, and do it hand in hand before a watching world.

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