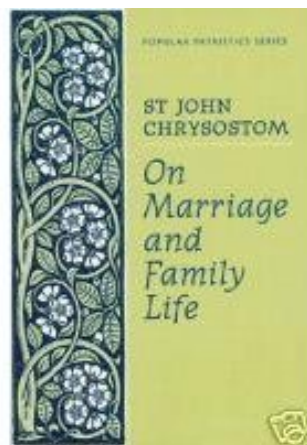




On Marriage and Family Life

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Inspired by the epistles of St Paul, St John has many things to say to Christian couples and families.

On Marriage and Family Life Details

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From Reader Review On Marriage and Family Life for online ebook

Elizabeth says

This was a wonderful little book of sermons from St. John "the Golden-mouthed". Very easy to read and digest. I've decided that this will be required reading for my children in high school.

LMS says

This. Man. Makes marriage sound like the greatest relationship on earth and also totally not the point of life at the same time. Chrysostom should be required reading. Sure he's a medieval monk and some of his thoughts are contemporary to his time. He's still a genius.

Luke says

St John Chrysostom addresses Christian couples of the 4th century in this set of homilies regarding marriage and family. The homilies are direct, frank and admonishing. He will often tell his audience that they probably feel insulted or embarrassed by his words, yet he continues on in the boldness that there is no shame in Christ's message.

What shame could he possibly bring when he discusses obligated sex towards your spouse, servitude of the wife to her husband, and calling women's roles inferior to the man's? These messages were shocking to some in the 4th century, and in today's post-feminist progressive social climate, so shocking that even reading such a book would probably make one lose all respect and be cast out of many churches, let alone the mistreatment by the social justice warrior public as a whole.

Yet, St John Chrysostom's culture suffered from remarkably similar problems that we face today such as disobedient wives, extravagant weddings, focusing on the outer rather than the inner, un-loving husbands, selfishness, and split households. So St John Chrysostom offers his solution - to go back to the scripture and learn from God through His son, the prophets, and the saints. In this way only, can we live godly lives in a marriage, which rivals that of the pious monastics.

Shout out to Ephraim for lending me this awesome book.

-wife has no power over her own body, but she is her husband's slave - and also his ruler...each other's servants.

-my body is not my own, but my wife's

-conjugal rights is a debt to be paid. If one abstains without the other's consent, it is an act of fraud.

-an unfaithful wife has defiled the sexual act itself. If her husband has intercourse with her, he becomes as impure as she is, since both of them become one body.

- outward beauty is full of conceit and licentiousness. It makes men jealous, and fills men with lustful thought. Its pleasure fades.

-look for affection, gentleness, and humility in a wife; these are the tokens of beauty.

-not wealth, but manners and virtue

- she should not demand equality, she is subject to the head...counterbalance he'd obedience with his love...body dedicated to the service of the head...head provide for the body.
- she who fears also loves, and she who loves her husband respects him because he is her head.
- where there is equal authority, there never is peace.
- a household cannot be a democracy, ruled by everyone, but the authority must necessarily rest in one person.
- what is respect? She should not stubbornly contradict you, and not rebel against your authority as if she were head of the house.
- provide your wife with everything and endure troubles for her sake.
- men are to focus on love and headship. Instruct your wife, and your whole household will be in order and harmony.
- the household is a little church.
- practically: be detached from money, strive above everything for virtue, keep the fear of God before our eyes.
- whenever you give your wife advice, always begin by telling her how much you love her.
- esteem her in the presence of your children and friends. Praise and show admiration for her good acts, and if she does anything foolish, advise her patiently.
- pray together at home and go to church. Discuss the readings, sermon and prayer with each other. Get each other's opinions.
- nothing in life is to be feared except offending God
- minimal jewelry, dignified clothing, furnish the house neatly and soberly. No shameful music or dancing.
- tell her that you love her more than your own life.
- wealth is a hindrance because it leaves us unprepared for the difficulties of life. Let us raise our children so that they can face any trouble and not be surprised when difficulties come.
- when we teach our children to be good, to be gentle, to be forgiving, to be generous, to love their fellow man, to regard this present age as nothing, we instill virtue in their souls, and reveal the image of God within them.
- therefore let us be greatly concerned for our wives and our children, and for ourselves as well, and as we educate both ourselves and them let us beg God to help us in our task.
- God helps those who work, not those who are idle
- imitate Paul's tears, and you will laugh to scorn the vanities of this passing life.
- on marriage parties - marrying your wife for procreation and moderation of life, have a banquet with friends but do not go to excess.
- when her daughter is to marry a man, do not look at his wealth or nationality or family social position. Look at his virtue, orderliness, dignity, husband skills, protector, piety, gentleness, wisdom, fear of the Lord.
- when you prepare for the wedding don't run around borrowing mirrors or spend endless hours worrying about dresses. Instead, make your house as beautiful as it can be, and then invite your family and your neighbours and friends. Invite as many people as you know that have good character.
- then take every care to choose a good, kind, docile wife.
- a wife has only one duty, to preserve what we have gathered, to protect our income, to take care of our household.
- to the men he assigned all the affairs of the city, all the business of the marketplace, courts, council-chambers, armies, and all the rest.
- God divided our life into these two parts (public for men, private for women), and gave the more necessary and important to the man, but the lesser and inferior part to the woman. In this way He arranged that we should admire the man more because we need his service more, and that because the woman has a humbler form of service she would not rebel against her husband.
- seek just one thing in a wife, virtue of soul and nobility of character. You will gain harmony and lasting love.
- things that are good in wife: gentleness, piety, chastity, moderate, disciplined, uncontentious, frugal, good with money, noble, generous with all she has, serving, willingness to provide beyond even what is asked,
- when you are going to take a wife, do not seek human aid, nor have recourse to women who trade in other's misfortunes and whose only object is to obtain a profit for themselves. Turn to God for help. He is not

ashamed to become your matchmaker.

-do not say "God will not speak to me" these are the words of a soul with little faith. God can quickly arrange everything He wishes even without using a voice.

-Abraham's Servant mentioned the wealth not to show that Abraham was rich, but to show that he loved God.

-their mothers did not raise them as mothers do now, corrupting them with frequent baths, perfumed ointments, cosmetics, soft garments, and many other such influences, making them weaker than they should be. Those mothers gave their daughters all kinds of hardy training.

Bradleya says

I enjoyed reading St. John Chrysostom On Marriage and Family Life during my engagement and first month of marriage. It is helpful to consider the context of the culture and time period of around 1600 years ago, but even so I found great insight about faith, marriage, and sexuality that is applicable to our society and lives in the 21st century in the United States. St. John Chrysostom's words have been edifying to me in following Jesus and preparing for the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony.

Nick says

Amazed at how deeply powerful Chrysostom speaks of Marriage, his writings cling to Scripture and the Savior.

Joe Wittwer says

Great preaching is impactful even centuries later in a different culture. Of course there are some cultural differences, but there are many similarities between 4th century Antioch or Constantinople, and our own. Human nature is the same regardless of century and culture, and Scripture applies equally well to both. This collection of John's sermons on marriage and family life is worth the read!

Chrissy says

Chrysostom is AWESOME! Again, you have to take a 'saint' with a grain of salt, but he is very wise and something to strive for. I really like his view of how the set-up of the family should be.

Dionysi Krinas says

At times it is clear that this book was written 16 centuries ago yet there is something about it that makes much of its advice resound for us today; I loved it and recommend it to all married couples.

Adam says

When one first approaches a Church Father's view on sexuality, marriage, and family life, one might expect only dreary warnings, outdated opinions, and a generally negative, Neo-Platonic view of the physical body. It seems as if every ancient Christian writer was a celibate, male monk, and therefore, as the typical preconceived notion might go, one can only expect the most generalized guidelines regarding sex and married life. Such an opinion is partially true; certainly someone like St Augustine on occasion wrote despairingly of the goodness of any sexual act, even within marriage.

Yet, John Chrysostom's homilies on the married estate praise the benefits of sex within marriage, and they honor the act of raising Christian children, and they even argue that husband and wife, when they are together in a holy union which images the union of Christ and His Church, can achieve the same kind of holiness and purity that is normally thought possible only for monks. This was pretty stunning for me; in my life I had learned that the Church had forgotten the God-pleasing benefits of marriage and raising a family until a disillusioned monk named Martin Luther started writing. It would seem that Chrysostom, 1100 years before the German professor, already had much to say on the holiness of this estate and the goodness of procreation.

Chrysostom's entire approach is positive and even joyful. He celebrates marriage in these homilies and shows, through Paul's words on sexuality in 1 Corinthians and Ephesians, that the marriage union is a great mystery whereby two become one in order to unite others - servants, neighbors, family members - to Christ Jesus. He refers to marriage as "mystery," the orthodox theological term for a sacrament, frequently.

The final chapter is an interesting re-telling of the Rebecca story from Genesis 24. Chrysostom argues that Rebecca is the ideal wife that the Bible reveals because she is modest, chaste, and hospitable. Far from giving an entirely allegorical interpretation of Rebecca and Isaac, Chrysostom comes at it from a refreshingly narrative-critical approach, with an eye to the practical lessons that God's Word teaches.

Coming from many different Lutheran and evangelical circles, I have frequently seen marriage tackled in different ways from pulpit and classroom. Typically when pastors speak of sex, they have only prohibitions to offer again and again. While the prohibitions are necessary, when they replace any positive or overarching teaching about sex, then sex is absurdly reduced into just the "dos and don'ts," and the question before marriage is, "How much can I get away with?" when the question during marriage is, "How do I keep my marriage exciting?" What facile and shallow questions. Chrysostom approaches sex from its goodness; first of all, God has created sex to save men and women from lust and unchastity, and secondly, He has created sex to allow new life to be created - life that is human and life that is found to be in God's image. Then the family, in its gentleness, love, kindness, and dignity, acts as the icon of Christ the Bridegroom's love for His Church the Bride. Here is a robust and thoroughly sacramental view of the love between husband and wife, and it is the single best book on marriage that I have ever read.

Christopher Chelpka says

As a preacher, I wish the gospel had been presented more prominently but it wasn't altogether missing, and I did find many things in these sermons I want to emulate in my own preaching.

As a husband, it was nothing short of inspirational. Nothing I've read before made me want to be a good husband (i.e. a loving husband) as much as this book. Chrysostom pulls no punches and gives lots of practical advice. Read it first for the shock value then again to soak in the content.

George says

A beautiful book of St. John's homilies on marriage and family life. As a husband and father, I found a lot of information useful to improve my life in both aspects. St. John values the moral precepts or Christian virtues as being the most beneficial characteristics one can find in a spouse. These virtues act as a balance, benefiting both spouses by bringing each person closer to God.

In keeping this review brief, I did want to point out that there was one fact of the book that I found particularly interested. During St. John Chrysostom's time, the wedding celebration (and pre-celebration) contained song and dances of debauchery and decadence. As I read these words, I felt like they were written in the modern age. Apparently over the course of 1500 or more years some things never change! St. John urges us to avoid these things as they are unnecessary contrary to married life.

Adayla says

I tried reading this several years ago and never finished-- "does this guy think women are only useful for the kitchen?"-- but much later and after 4+ years of marriage, my thoughts on it are much different.

Several times I thought, "that is so romantic" and "how true". While I believe these little sermon things are focused toward people preparing their search for a spouse, I felt it was much more relatable and better understood after years of marriage. But that could be argued that it is our modern society that contributed to that and how marriage isn't spoken of so directly and specifically like this. Deep thoughts!

For being spoken in the 400s, it's amazing how much I agree with this and understood it so well. From the descriptions of wedding receptions (it's seriously exactly like today) to the duties of husband and wife, I found it very easy to say "so much yes!"

I do recommend this book but I also very much understand if it just doesn't.. click.. with people who aren't in this mindset yet.

Karen says

I suspect St. John Chrysostom's instruction will offend those who have trouble calibrating for the era. For the readers who can peer around their own filters and birth year, there are innumerable kernels of wisdom to be had, despite the discomfort of hearing many of them. This book is not for everybody. It will be a 5 star book for some and a 1 star book for others. For new dabblers in orthodoxy or Christianity, I would NOT start with this book.

Rachel says

My adoration for the theology of St. Augustine (354-431 A.D.) is an open secret, but even if his views of marriage and sexuality are read in context (which does not happen often enough, in my opinion), he still

comes across as a bit of a pessimist on those subjects. Of course, this is the man who infamously prayed [paraphrased]: "Lord, make me chaste, but not just yet."

Unlike Augustine the philandering playboy-turned-celibate, St. John Chrysostom (347–407 A.D.) apparently did not undergo an epic struggle with continence, but was instead a monk renowned for his strict asceticism. However, his views of love, marriage, the body, and sexuality are nothing short of optimistic and uplifting, even by contemporary standards. In one sermon, John even goes so far as to rebuke his listeners for blushing and becoming uncomfortable about his frank and positive appraisal of intimacy within marriage. He tells them that their values are disordered if his preaching on the topic embarrasses them, while they are unashamed to spend exorbitant sums of money on weddings that rival pagan celebrations and devolve into drunken debauchery.

John's collected homilies on the topic of marriage and family life praise the beauty and holiness of this vocation, and offer irrefutable evidence against claims that the Fathers of the Church shared a universally dour outlook on the body and sex. It is a quick read, and worth the time of anyone interested in patristics or historical theology of marriage.

"Pray together at home and go to Church; when you come back home, let each ask the other the meaning of the readings and the prayers....If your marriage is like this, your perfection will rival the holiest of monks." (Homily 20)

Tara says

Not going to lie, it's super refreshing to read Chrysostom on marriage after so much Augustine. Much more positive and doesn't require as much patient understanding as poor dear Augustine.

Roughly 98% of what Chrysostom says could've come straight from your average complementarian pastor today. In many ways, he actually seems slightly subversive. Complementarian pastors could take some hints from him on the topic of domestic abuse, mutuality, double-standards, and what it is to be a good wife.

This is a very readable translation, though there are some issues of accuracy that come along with that. The translator also abridges the text in places which, again, is great for readability but not for scholarship.
