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Love and Marriage

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Honors Senior Thesis

“You say you love rain, but you use an umbrella to walk under it.

You say you love sun, but you seek shelter when it is shining.

You say you love wind, but when it comes you close your windows.

So that’s why I’m scared when you say you love me.”

Bob Marley

Introduction

“First comes love, then comes marriage, then comes a baby in the baby carriage...” This old nursery rhyme used to reflect the ideals of society; not so anymore. With so many “options” and “alternatives”, this sequence of events is becoming more and more rare. Though many would argue against a marriage without love as the primary reason, the logic of the rest of the rhyme has been thrown out the window. With casual sex growing to be a more accepted occurrence, many babies are being born to parents who are not married. Even more sadly, the parents may not love each other or perhaps have only just met. This reversal of events has broken down the stable family structure that has been in existence for millennia. “Marriage is the fundamental building block of all human civilization,” Anderson, in his article *Marriage: What It Is, Why It Matters, and the Consequences of Redefining It*, says. “Marriage is a natural institution that predates government... [it] helps to channel procreative love into a stable institution that provides for the orderly bearing and rearing of the next generation.”

Relationships are one of the most important aspects of life. Everyone has seen and heard about how they should or should not do certain things in a relationship. Though many young adults do not see marriage as an automatic step in their plan(Kefalas, 2011), marriage is one of the central relationships of a person’s life (Grohol, 2007). With so many sources of media being thrown at people every waking minute of their lives, one needs to think critically about the messages that are being

portrayed through songs, advertisements, books, television shows, films, and magazines. These pieces of work give evidence to which messages the public supports by not only their popularity, but also their acceptance and approval. Media is created every minute of the day, reflecting the most up-to-date ideals of the masses.

In contrast with the ever-changing, easily swayed views of the public, the Christian Bible has been consistent for centuries. Many have no interest in hearing what it has to say because it is “quoted” all the time. It has been used to support or demolish ideas, causes, and behaviors. Twisting and perversion of the truth that lies inside has caused quite an uproar in the public sphere. People decide to reject the Bible for two main reasons. First, they have seen horrendous acts done throughout history in the name of the Bible - the hypocrisy of “Christians” stands in their way, or secondly, because the Bible teaches directly against something they feel they have the right to do. With so many different pieces of work using the Bible for contradicting points, there is an overwhelming opportunity for misinterpretation. To ward against this, the following paper will be based on the Bible itself; only authors with concrete Biblical evidence will be used for supporting material. Looking at the vast topic of love and marriage, it is near impossible to cover all that the Bible has to say. The specific passages used were chosen only because of their close relevance to the topic at hand; to give solutions to the issues that arise from society’s views of love and marriage.

When it comes down to it, society gives a couple two options: there can be uneven levels of caring from each person, which gives fear to the one who cares more and power to the one who cares less; or both people can decide not to care deeply at all

and treat their relationship as purely animalistic. In stark contrast, the Bible defines marriage with lifelong monogamy, sexual exclusivity, and sacrificial love, where both partners can be united as one. This allows the couple a third option which casts out both fear of abandonment and the power struggle. A Biblical marriage is the only solution to the volatility, insecurity, and fragility of intimate relationships.

Societal views of love and marriage

Society has norms and opinions on everything from the way a woman's hair should be styled to the level of violence a child should be allowed to view at any given age. Society says it is best to be thin, to be strong, and to need no one. It tells people that brand name products are the way to go, and owning a nice car is a status symbol. Norms keep people from singing on a public sidewalk or talking about their feelings with a stranger. But how are these messages communicated to the masses? How does society inform people of what their opinions and behaviors should be? It is done through sights, sounds, body language, facial expressions, words, and themes.

Mass media is far more vast in this century than any other before it. It is near impossible not to come into contact with it on a daily basis. Even if someone decided not to purchase any type of media, they would see the billboards along the highway, advertisements on posters at the bus stop, newsstands filled with celebrity gossip, magazine covers in a waiting room, and hear the music and news from radios and public televisions. Society has no need to spell out its expectations; mass media does it without the public even realizing it. The lyrics of songs, story lines of television shows,

content of magazines, images and ideas portrayed and triumphed in movies - all instruct people on what to think and how to live.

There are vast amounts of work done on the norms that tell people what they should be themselves. But what does society tell people about how to relate to others? How should people interact with each other - in their thoughts, words, and actions? What is expected when two people decide they want to be more than just friends? Are there any societal guidelines for what a relationship should look like?

Methods

To assess the views of American society on love and marriage, the most prevalent forms of media and entertainment were chosen: music and movies. To determine the most supported music in American society, the Z100 New York chart for the year of 2013 was used. Those in positions one, three, seven, eight, and nine were analyzed. Numbers two, four, five, and six were excluded for relevance; they were not written around a theme of interaction between members of a couple. These songs were coded objectively only according to their lyrics, using the same criteria as films.

However, their music videos also provided insights, and were used for further analysis.

Films were chosen through an assessment of popularity in the year of 2013 as well. The amount the public spent at the box office indicates interest and popularity of the film. These records were already calculated, and the IMDB website was used to gain access to statistics on the top-selling movies. From that list, the top five films were

coded and analyzed. There was no need for narrowing; all five of the top films contained a story line involving the creation or sustaining of an intimate relationship.

Music

Looking at the details of the lyrics in these songs was difficult only for the reason that while other forms of media may be more subtle, some of these songs give such an ugly view of interactions between people that it was hard to fathom the public accepting them. This points not only to the depravity of the human race, but also the ignorance. These songs are heard, hummed, stuck in heads, and sung along to while many do not take the time to learn the meaning of the lyrics.

The fifth most popular relationships song (ninth overall), was “I Knew You Were Trouble” by Taylor Swift (Z100, 2014). The lyrics tell the story of a girl who’s heart has been broken by a boyfriend she knew would be trouble from the first time she saw him. She realizes that their relationship was one-sided; she was the one who truly had feelings for him, while he never really loved her, or anyone for that matter. Being broken, she does not want him to know that he is the reason for her heartache. Though it is clear that he broke off the relationship, she blames herself for not listening to her instincts, which told her that this boy was no good for her. (The lyrics can be found at the end of the piece, along with the lyrics of all of the other songs)

| includes references to: | yes/no | number/example |
|---|---------|---|
| uses the word "love" | YES | "you never loved me, or her, or anyone" |
| length of relationship short or undefined | YES | undefined, but ended |
| length of relationship assumed to be lifelong | NO | |
| body parts/clothes of a woman | NO | |
| instructions | NO | |
| body parts/clothes of a man | YES | "a new notch in your belt is all I'll ever be" |
| physical attractiveness | NO | |
| personality/character | YES | "you didn't care", "trouble", "long gone when he met me", "never loved" |
| attaches value/deep connection to sex | N/A | |
| sex is for objectification or only personal gain | N/A | |
| loyalty/fidelity | NO | |
| selflessness/sacrifice | NO | |
| dependency on other unhealthy - source of all happiness | YES | "you're drowning" |
| dependency on other healthy | NO | |
| unity | NO | |
| work | NO | |
| influence of alcohol/drugs | Unknown | "flew me to places I'd never been" |

| includes references to: | yes/no | number/example |
|-------------------------|---------|---|
| casual sex | NO | |
| fate | NO | |
| trust/commitment | Unknown | She trusted him, but he broke it |
| bed/sheets | NO | |
| tumultuous | YES | "No apologies, he'll never see you cry, pretends he doesn't know that he's the reason why you're drowning", "you were trouble", "flew me to places... til you put me down", "shame on me now" |

Figure 1. Analysis of "I Knew You Were Trouble" Lyrics

This analysis shows an idea of love that creates no unity or commitment. Instead, it spells out one of the sad commonplace ideas in the American culture of relationships: the one who cares less holds the power. The narrator in the song gave this relationship all she had, ignoring her conscience. The music video that accompanies this song has additional spoken lyrics that give a richer explanation of the story told in this song. At the beginning, the artist says,

I think, I think when it's all over, it just comes back in flashes, you know?
 It's like a kaleidoscope of memories. It just all comes back, but he never does. I think part of me knew the second I saw him that this would happen. It's not really anything he said or anything he did, it was the feeling that came along with it. And the crazy thing is I don't know if I'm ever gonna feel that way again. But I don't know if I should. I knew his world moved too fast and burned too bright. But I just thought, how can the devil be pulling you toward someone who looks so

much like an angel when he smiles at you? Maybe he knew that when he saw me. I guess I just lost my balance. I think that the worst part of it all wasn't losing him. It was losing me, (Taylor Swift, 2013).

So while this song may indicate that it is unhealthy, there is a persistent pattern in society of people changing the very essence who they are to try and please their partner.

A person often changes what they enjoy, their preferences and even morals to try and be who they think the other wants them to be; the object of one's affections is held in extremely high priority during this phase. Wrapping their identity up in another without full commitment from both partners can only lead to hurt. When the partner who cares less pulls away, the other is left drowning, searching for a lifeline back to the way they used to be; where they came from. People often feel that they cannot live without their significant other, as shown in the fourth most popular song, "Stay" by Rihanna (Z100, 2014).

The very beginning of the song compares the couple's attraction to an infection, apparently in a way that makes it appealing. The girl, again, seems to be in the position of caring more about the relationship and therefore fearful. She states in the chorus that, "something in the way you move, makes me feel like I can't live without you. It takes me all the way, I want you to stay." Again, the entire of the identity of the narrator is wrapped up in her significant other. Near the end of the song, the artist sings, "funny you're the broken one but I'm the only one who needed saving, 'cause when you never see the light it's hard to know which one of us is caving." There seems to be a lack of

knowledge of truth in these lyrics - there is a lack of light to show what is really happening. She knows that he is broken, but he convinces her that she is not enough, she needs saving.

“Stay” describes the roller coaster of emotions that people often undergo throughout a relationship. Twice there is a section about how the two go “round and around and around and around,” suggesting the never ending cycle of a couple being “off” and “on.” She has been pulled every which way and is in a state of knowing nothing but of her desire for her partner to stay. When everything is falling apart, even if at the hand of the partner, the artist wants just one thing, at least, to be consistent: that her partner is there.

| includes references to: | yes/no | number/example |
|--|---------|---------------------------------|
| uses the word “love” | NO | |
| length of relationship short or undefined | Unknown | Undefined |
| length of relationship assumed to be lifelong | Unknown | She wants him to stay |
| body parts/clothes of a woman | YES | hands |
| instructions | NO | |
| body parts of a man | NO | |
| physical attractiveness | Unknown | “Something in the way you move” |
| personality/character | NO | |
| attaches value/deep connection to sex | N/A | |
| sex is for objectification or only personal gain | N/A | |
| loyalty/fidelity | Unknown | She wants him to stay |
| selflessness/sacrifice | NO | |

| includes references to: | yes/no | number/example |
|---|---------|--|
| dependency on other unhealthy - source of all happiness | YES | “ooh, the reason I hold on”, “I can’t live without you” |
| dependency on other healthy | NO | |
| unity | NO | |
| work | NO | |
| influence of alcohol/drugs | NO | |
| casual sex | NO | |
| fate | NO | |
| trust/commitment | Unknown | “I want you to stay” |
| bed/sheets | NO | |
| tumultuous | YES | “all along it was a fever”, “round and around and around and around we go” |

Figure 2. Analysis of “Stay” Lyrics

The third song on the list, “When I Was Your Man” was created by a male artist, Bruno Mars (Z100, 2014). This song tells the story of a man who was in a relationship with a woman who throughout the song does not have a single bad word sung about her. The man did not realize the treasure that he had in this relationship, and lost her to another man. Now he sings of what he should have done while he still had her, such as buying her flowers, holding her hand, and giving her his time and attention. The artist understands what got in the way of him doing these things: his pride, ego, needs, and selfish ways. This song is unique in that it speaks of the sacrifice that should come with

a relationship; not the sacrifice of personality and character, but of time, possessions, and activities.

Bruno Mars's lyrics are the only ones on this list that show an idea of love that extends past how it can benefit the self. Though she is not longer with him and it can bring him no personal gain, he truly hopes that she is happy and that the man she is now with treats her with kindness, generosity, and respect. This side of relationships between human beings is not widely spoken of in society.

The sad side of this song is that love is seen as something you can "fall into", and therefore also fall out of. This song especially shows how someone can be "in love" with another, yet not really love them. The artist thought that he loved this woman, but now sees the ways in which he failed; it shows that he never really loved her through his actions at all.

| includes references to: | yes/no | number/example |
|---|-----------|---------------------------|
| uses the word "love" | Undefined | "loved to dance" |
| length of relationship short or undefined | YES | Undefined, but ended |
| length of relationship assumed to be lifelong | NO | |
| body parts/clothes of a woman | YES | hand - "held you're hand" |
| instructions | NO | |
| body parts/clothes of a man | YES | eyes |
| physical attractiveness | NO | |

| includes references to: | yes/no | number/example |
|---|--------|--|
| personality/character | NO | |
| attaches value/deep connection to sex | N/A | |
| sex is for objectification or only personal gain | N/A | |
| loyalty/fidelity | NO | |
| selflessness/sacrifice | YES | “should have bought you flowers”, “should have gave you all my hours” |
| dependency on other u healthy - source of all happiness | NO | |
| dependency on other healthy | YES | Still wants her to be happy |
| unity | NO | |
| work | YES | shows how he should have worked for her, gave their relationship more time |
| influence of alcohol/drugs | NO | |
| casual sex | NO | |
| fate | NO | |
| trust/commitment | YES | should have committed all time and effort |
| bed/sheets | YES | “Same bed but it feels just a little bit bigger now” |
| tumultuous | YES | heartbreak, tear me down, haunted, mess |

Figure 3. Analysis of “When I Was Your Man” Lyrics

The second most popular song of this list (third overall), was “Just Give Me A Reason” by Pink on her ill-fitting album title, *The Truth About Love* (Z100, 2014). The resounding message of this song is that the artist wants desperately to stay with her partner, she just needs a reason to. She needs to know that their relationship is not broken, just bent and that they can learn to love again. These statements lead to two

possible independent or coexisting explanations. On one hand, Pink could be portraying how fickle the feeling of love is and that at this particular moment, she is not feeling “in love” with her partner; she wants to know if they can “learn” to feel that way again. On the other hand, the lyrics could be showing how much work love can take and that the process requires learning from both people.

In this duet with Nate Ruess, the song shows the different emotional needs of men and women and the stereotypical roles society has for the. Getting over these obstacles may be one of the absolute hardest parts of an enduring relationship, as shown in this song. The first verse and chorus are Pink describing the brokenness of the relationship and the fixing that it needs. The second verse, however, has Ruess singing that he has no idea where this conflict is coming from, he thought that they were fine. He states that this is just her head “running wild again”. This song gives a picture of men viewing women as paranoid, overly emotional, and too sensitive. It also shows how women often view men as having no clue what is actually occurring in their lives and especially their interpersonal relationships. With all of these differences, how are men and women ever to stay together for a lifetime? The answer Pink gives is that it must be fate, “it’s [written] in the stars.”

| includes references to: | yes/no | number/example |
|---|---------|-----------------------------------|
| uses the word “love” | YES | 18 - “we can learn to love again” |
| length of relationship short or undefined | Unknown | possibly undefined |
| length of relationship assumed to be lifelong | Unknown | possibly undefined |
| body parts/ clothes of a woman | YES | heart, tear ducts |

| includes references to: | yes/no | number/example |
|---|---------|---|
| instructions | NO | |
| body parts/clothes of a man | YES | “your head is running wild again”, heart |
| physical attractiveness | NO | |
| personality/character | Unknown | “not broken, just bent” |
| attaches value/deep connection to sex | N/A | |
| sex is for objectification or only personal gain | N/A | |
| loyalty/fidelity | YES | trying to fix what’s broken |
| selflessness/sacrifice | YES | “I let you see the parts of me that weren’t all that pretty” “fix” |
| dependency on other unhealthy - source of all happiness | Unknown | “Just give me a reason, just a little bit’s enough”, “our love’s enough” |
| dependency on other healthy | Unknown | trying to fix what’s broken |
| unity | NO | |
| work | YES | “learn”, “fix” |
| influence of alcohol/drugs | YES | “you’re pouring a drink” |
| casual sex | NO | |
| fate | YES | “it’s written in the stars” |
| trust/commitment | YES | working at it - committed to trying |
| bed/sheets | YES | “you used to lie so close to me, oh, oh, there’s nothing more than empty sheets between our love” |
| tumultuous | YES | “bad dreams”, “It’s all in your mind”, “I thought we were fine”, “we’re not broken, just bent” |

Figure 4. Analysis of “Just Give Me A Reason” Lyrics

The most popular song, both on this list and overall, was “Blurred Lines” by Robbin Thicke, featuring T.I. and Pharrell (Z100, 2014). Internationally, the single was

the highest-selling digital single of 2013 and third highest of all time, with sales of over 14.8 million copies (Billboard, 2014). In the United States, “Blurred Lines” topped the Billboard Hot 100 for twelve weeks; this was not a song that came and went, it has been popular for over a year. The lyrics in this song talk about the blurred lines between what a good girl “should” do and what she “wants” to do. Throughout the song, the singers are singing to a good girl that they want to liberate from her sexual boundaries. The third verse speaks purely for itself:

One thing I ask of you
 Let me be the one you back that ass to
 Yo, from Malibu to Paris, boo
 Yeah, had a bitch, but she ain't bad as you
 So hit me up when you pass through
 I'll give you something big enough to tear your ass in two
 Swag on, even when you dress casual
 I mean it's almost unbearable
 In a hundred years not dare would I
 Pull a Pharcyde let you pass me by
 Nothin' like your last guy, he too square for you
 He don't smack that ass and pull your hair like that
 So I'm just watching and waitin'
 For you to salute the true big pimpin'
 Not many women can refuse this pimping
 I'm a nice guy, but don't get it if you get with me

It is clear that there is no desire for a lasting relationship. There is no mention of love anywhere in the song because that is not what this song is about. The interactions between individuals here reduce them to animals, as even stated in the lyrics. The song speaks to a purely physical relationship, with no need for respect or reverence.

The sheer popularity of this song speaks to the norm that the public does not value humans other than themselves. There is no need for human interaction when it

comes to sex, only animalistic behavior. The lines between what is expected and what is wanted are being blurred because society has helped people decide that the lines should only be drawn around what is desired, not the other way around. There is no need for boundaries if a person decides it will make them happy.

The music video pushes the limits of this song even further, with topless girls, animals, and substance abuse (Stelios, 2013). There was such controversy that it was taken down from Youtube before being restored a few weeks later, with both a version on Vevo that is “unrated” and one that has the females put a shirt on. When asked about the racy content, Thicke said, “We tried to do everything that was taboo. Bestiality, drug injections, and everything that is completely derogatory towards women,” (Stelios, 2013). The statement shows that by doing what is taboo, nothing becomes taboo. “All of the basic moral lines that have governed relationships and sexuality should really be thrown away” is the message that society sends through this song.

| includes references to: | yes/no | number/example |
|---|--------|--|
| uses the word "love" | NO | 0 |
| length of relationship short or undefined | YES | "So hit me up when you pass through" |
| length of relationship assumed to be lifelong | NO | |
| body parts/clothes of a woman | YES | hands - "grab me", legs - "what do they make dreams for when you got them jeans on", ass - see verse 3, hair - verse 3 |
| instructions | YES | "shake the vibe, ged down, get up, do it like it hurt" |
| body parts/clothes of a man | YES | "I'll give you something big enough to tear your ass in two" |
| physical attractiveness | YES | "you the hottest bitch in this place" |
| personality/character | YES | "you're a good girl" |
| attaches value/deep connection to sex | NO | |
| sex is for objectification or only personal gain | YES | "you know you want it", "Baby, can you breathe, I got this from Jamaica..." "must want to get nasty", "one thing I ask of you, let me be the one you back that ass to" |
| loyalty/fidelity | NO | |
| selflessness/sacrifice | NO | |
| dependency on other unhealthy - source of all happiness | N/A | |
| dependency on other healthy | N/A | |
| unity | NO | |
| work | YES | only in reference to sex - "do it like it hurt" |
| influence of alcohol/drugs | YES | "talk about getting blasted" |
| casual sex | YES | |
| fate | NO | |
| trust/commitment | NO | |
| bed/sheets | NO | |
| tumultuous | NO | |

Figure 5. Analysis of “Blurred Lines” Lyrics

Throughout these songs, there seems to be one common theme: be the one who cares less, or the relationship will be filled with pain and end in heartbreak. “I Knew You Were Trouble” describes this idea perfectly; the artist is heartbroken after believing she cared too deeply about her boyfriend. The song does not indicate that he cared for her at all, which put him in a position of complete power over her emotions and behavior. She is now bitter and ashamed. “Stay” also causes the listener to hear the artist’s pain over the loss of control in her life; she needs her partner in order to continue on. Their relationship has been hard, broken, and full of ups and downs, much like “Just Give Me A Reason.” Both songs also begin with the first verse describing what brought them to the relationship as controlling, once again showing how the partner who cares less holds the power over the other. The artists describe their fear at losing their significant other and are now grasping at straws for the life they long for. “When I Was Your Man” has a much softer tone to the lyrics, but the artist still suffers from the pain and fear of a lost relationship and states that “it haunts me every time I close my eyes.” Fear rules these relationships for one, while power fuels the relationship for the other.

The number one song in the nation finally comes up with society’s solution: stop being human. It is human emotions and expectations that cause heartache and pain. Instead, if people are treated as animals, there is no reason to care about them. Without any investment in the relationship, each partner is secured from the heartbreak of losing the other. There is also no fear and both people have equal power. There are

no limits or boundaries on the most-likely short lived relationship and people have no need to follow moral guidelines; whatever they want, they do. Society has no qualms on reducing the human experience down to instincts and animalistic behavior.

Movies

IMDb's list of "Top-US-Grossing Feature Films Released in 2013" list was used to choose the top five most successful movies at the box office. All of the top five included themes of love throughout their stories, so none were excluded. Their profit ranged from \$291 million for Man of Steel, the lowest, to \$425 million for The Hunger Games: Catching Fire, the highest (IMDb, 2014). With an average theater ticket costing \$8.13 (Schwartzel, 2014), this means that approximately 35.8 million people went to see Man of Steel and 52.3 million people paid for a ticket to see Catching Fire. When compared to television shows, even the lowest of the top five reaches almost double the audience - the most watched television show was NCIS, which had an average of 21.6 million viewers (Schneider, 2013).

The incredible fact is that the television shows were all produced by CBS, which is a channel that is free to the general public - no cable service is required - so viewing these series is passive and requires no investment from the audience. For films, an individual must not only cut out a specific time in their schedule and find transportation to a theater, but then also pay for their ticket. This shows just how much the public must support the film in order for it to be such a big success. The plot and ideas of these movies must be accepted by society as a whole in order to gain not only such high revenue, but also high acclaim from the audiences. Rottentomatoes.com, a website

that provides critic reviews and records viewer approval, shows that for all five of the films, over seventy-five percent of viewers who gave a rating liked it. So what do these films say about love and marriage?

The fifth top grossing movie, *Man of Steel*, is the story of Kal-el turned Clark Kent, a.k.a. Superman (IMDb, 2014). Born on a planet about to be destroyed, his parents sent him to Earth. He was raised in a Kansas home and taught to control his powers. Lois Lane, a journalist, finds out about who Superman really is, but decides not to expose him. This relationship is filled with loyalty and sacrifice, displayed when General Zod, from Superman's home planet Krypton, threatens all people on Earth if Superman is not handed over. After surrendering, Superman and Lois are put in great danger when it becomes apparent that Zod has no concern for the human race and wants to recreate his home planet on Earth. Superman cannot support Zod's desire for genocide, and expresses his loyalty to the humans he was raised to love. After ridding the planet of all other Kryptonians, only Zod and Superman are left. Given no choice, Superman kills Zod before he can murder an innocent family. In the aftermath, Superman and Lois are reunited and comfort one another.

| includes references to: | yes/no | number/example |
|---|--------|---|
| uses the word "love" | YES | 2 - "You really love those guys" |
| being "in love"/ "falling" | NO | |
| length of relationship short or undefined | YES | Undefined |
| length of relationship assumed to be lifelong | NO | |
| body parts of a woman | YES | a woman's butt is smacked in a bar |
| body parts of a man | YES | muscles |
| physical attractiveness | YES | "I think she's sexy", "I just think he's kind of hot" |
| personality/character | YES | Relationship characters are developed throughout film |
| attaches value/deep connection to sex | N/A | |
| talks about sex explicitly or implicitly for purposes of objectification - only personal gain | N/A | |
| loyalty/fidelity | YES | Kal-el's parents and adoptive parents were loyal to each other |
| selflessness/sacrifice | YES | both sets of Kal-el's parents sacrifice things for him |
| dependency on other unhealthy - source of all happiness | NO | |
| dependency on other healthy | YES | Lois is attracted to Clark, but her emotional life does not depend on him |
| unity | YES | In both sets of parents |
| work | YES | all couples work on their relationship in the film |
| influence of alcohol/drugs | NO | |
| casual sex | NO | |
| fate | NO | |

| includes references to: | yes/no | number/example |
|-------------------------|--------|---|
| trust/commitment | YES | Clark and Lois must trust each other |
| bed/sheets | NO | |
| tumultuous | YES | Clark's life is difficult and any relationship he has will be complicated by his secret |

Figure 6. Analysis of Man of Steel

Analyzing this movie, it is clear that Superman embodies many human ideals. He attempts to do the right thing in all situations, respects his parents, and is willing to sacrifice himself for the greater good. When it comes to his relationship with Lois, he is fiercely protective. Superman has her best interest at heart and does everything in his power to keep her safe. Though the film plays on the idea of the damsel-in-distress, Lois also acts as an individual. She trusts Superman, even before knowing him for any great length of time. Their relationship is fast and committed, but is that only brought out by the situation? Would they work as hard to keep their relationship together if their biggest problems were that he always left the seat up and she could never seem to get the hang of cooking? The extraordinary circumstances bring out the extraordinary characteristics of people; without which, auto-pilot can take over and no diligent attention is paid to the way each one treats the other. A common enemy brings the two extremely close, but is that the only solution to relationships that are falling apart?

A common enemy is also a joining factor in the next highest grossing film: *Despicable Me 2* (IMDb, 2014). Gru, a former super-villain, and his new partner Lucy work together for the Anti-Villain League, trying to bring down a thief who has stolen an entire laboratory in the Arctic, which contained a serum to mutate creatures. Gru also

has the responsibility of caring for his three newly adopted daughters Margo, Agnes, and Edith. Gru and Lucy work together investigating the suspects and realize that they have feelings for each other after Lucy helps Gru out of a terrible blind-date by shooting the woman with a tranquilizer. Gru is very timid about his feelings, which creates a problem when Lucy is reassigned to Australia after they make an arrest in the case. Gru is too nervous to ask Lucy out on a date, and she leaves on her flight. To try and cheer his daughters up, he takes them to a party at the restaurant owned by the man Gru believes is truly responsible for the stolen laboratory and serum even though there is no proof. Margo spends time with a boy she has a crush on, but ultimately has her heart broken when he starts dancing with another girl. She has been enticed and acts on emotion alone, which has distorted her priorities and compromised her judgement. Her sadness is over-shadowed when evidence proves that the restaurant owner is the true villain behind the thefts. Gru's old assistant tells him the truth and that now the thief has Lucy; she tried to come back to share her feelings with Gru. Gru is finally able to ask Lucy for a date as they are strapped to a rocket headed for a volcano. Ultimately, he, Lucy, the girls, and all of Gru's minions save the day and Gru and Lucy are able to go on a date. One hundred and forty-seven dates later, they are married.

| includes references to: | yes/no | number/example |
|---|--------|---|
| uses the word "love" | YES | 7 |
| being "in love"/ "falling" | NO | |
| length of relationship short or undefined | NO | |
| length of relationship assumed to be lifelong | YES | Gru and Lucy get married |
| body parts of a woman | NO | |
| body parts of a man | NO | |
| physical attractiveness | NO | |
| personality/character | YES | Gru loves Lucy for her character, not her looks |
| attaches value/deep connection to sex | N/A | |
| talks about sex explicitly or implicitly for purposes of objectification - only personal gain | N/A | |
| loyalty/fidelity | YES | the marriage of Gru and Lucy implies loyalty |
| selflessness/sacrifice | YES | Gru acts selflessly to save Lucy |
| dependency on other unhealthy - source of all happiness | NO | |
| dependency on other healthy | YES | |
| unity | YES | They work as a team |
| work | YES | Gru and Lucy work at their relationship |

| includes references to: | yes/no | number/example |
|----------------------------|--------|--|
| influence of alcohol/drugs | NO | |
| casual sex | N/A | |
| fate | NO | |
| trust/commitment | YES | commitment is evidenced by their decision to marry |
| bed/sheets | NO | only in putting Gru's daughters to bed |
| tumultuous | YES | there are many ups and downs in their relationship |

Figure 7. Analysis of Despicable Me 2

This story exemplifies the fear that often comes with having romantic feelings for someone. Only when put in a life or death situation is Gru able to overcome this fear and truly express himself. This parallels to Man of Steel in that it takes extreme circumstances to bring out extraordinary actions from people. Both films are a wonderful example of love, but more-so through the parent and child relationship than the romantic relationships. Both sets of Kal-el's parents loved him with all their being, sacrificing anything and everything for his safety and freedom. Gru does the same for his daughters, treating them with behavior that comes from selfless love. The romantic relationships in these films show sacrifice as well, but really only in life or death situations. The parents show a love to their children that surpasses not only their love for their own lives, but also their everyday comforts and preferences; why is this so hard to do in an intimate relationship? These films capture society's idea that parents should give everything for their children; they are the center of their homes and lives. The world of a parent should revolve around their children, is what society is saying. Why is this type of relationship valued so much higher than that of partners or spouses? Full

commitment is seen in the parental relationships, but there is always a possible escape route when it comes to romantic relationships.

Frozen, the highest-grossing animated film of all time, comes in third, raking in three hundred ninety-nine million dollars at the box-office alone (IMDb, 2014). The story revolves around two sisters, Elsa and Anna. Elsa was born with special powers to control snow and ice, but does not learn how to control them in childhood. After an accident that almost killed Anna, their parents decide to keep Elsa's powers secret, even from Anna. The struggle with her powers, though, has left Elsa very much alone after the parents die unexpectedly when the girls are young and the city gates are closed. When Elsa is old enough to become queen, her coronation causes the gates to open again. Hans, a prince who has come from another country, charms Anna - they finish each others sentences and share all of the same likes and dislikes. They are so smitten with each other, they decide they want to be engaged even though they only met approximately six hours earlier. Elsa tells her she cannot marry a man she just met. The two argue and Elsa accidentally uses her powers, covering the city in ice and snow, causing all of the townspeople to become fearful and believe she is an enemy. She runs away and Anna tries to find her, leaving Hans in charge. On her journey, Anna meets Kristoff, a boy, and Olaf, a snowman, who help her to find Elsa. The sisters are reunited, but Elsa is still reluctant to come back with Anna; in an argument, Elsa accidentally strikes ice into Anna's heart. Kristoff's friends say only an act of "true love" can thaw a frozen heart. Anna believes Hans is her true love, and Kristoff rushes her to him to receive a kiss. However, while the girls are gone, it is discovered that Hans is not

who he claims to be - he simply wants to take over the kingdom. He finds Elsa and captures her. When Anna arrives, Hans reveals his true plans and refuses to help her. A few more captures and escapes later, Anna is left with a decision: to run to Kristoff and receive a kiss because Olaf has told her he is in love with her, or to save her sister who Hans is about to kill. Choosing her sister, Anna becomes completely frozen and blocks Hans's sword. This true act of love actually thaws her heart though, and Elsa discovers how she can control her powers: with love.

| includes references to: | yes/no | number/example |
|---|--------|---|
| uses the word "love" | YES | 35 - "love is an open door", "Anna, because I love you, I insist you run." |
| being "in love"/ "falling" | YES | Anna and Hans want to get engaged after knowing each other only a day |
| length of relationship short or undefined | YES | In the end it is never known how long Anna and Kristoff's relationship lasts |
| length of relationship assumed to be lifelong | YES | Anna and Hans want to get married, but it is extremely premature |
| body parts of a woman | YES | much attention paid to Elsa's hands |
| body parts of a man | YES | Olaf's body parts are always coming unattached, and must be reconnected |
| physical attractiveness | YES | beautiful, gorgeous, handsome |
| personality/character | YES | Elsa's and Anna's characters are developed most. Hans's character comes to light - he is not the kind man Anna believed him to be |
| attaches value/deep connection to sex | N/A | |
| talks about sex explicitly or implicitly for purposes of objectification - only personal gain | N/A | |
| loyalty/fidelity | N/A | |
| selflessness/sacrifice | YES | Kristoff looks out for Anna's best interest |
| dependency on other unhealthy - source of all happiness | YES | Anna and Hans |

| includes references to: | yes/no | number/example |
|-----------------------------|--------|--|
| dependency on other healthy | YES | Anna and Kristoff help each other |
| unity | NO | |
| work | YES | Anna and Kristoff work at their relationship |
| influence of alcohol/drugs | NO | |
| casual sex | N/A | |
| fate | NO | |
| trust/commitment | YES | trust is present, commitment is hazy |
| bed/sheets | NO | |
| tumultuous | YES | Hans is not who he appears to be, which causes many problems |

Figure 8. Analysis of Frozen

Throughout the film, Anna is constantly tossed about by her feelings. Her idea of love and romance is distorted, most likely because of her secluded childhood. She falls in love with the first man she spends time with and wants to be married. Finding out later that he has no intention of a relationship with her, she realizes that Kristoff has been far more kind and helpful. Even though her ideas of love are a bit malformed, she sees that while she thinks she loved Hans, and possibly will love Kristoff, she *knows* that she loves her sister Elsa, which is why she is willing to lay down her life for her. This true act of love in the film shows how sacrificial love really must be. That level of loyalty and commitment overcomes all fears and obstacles. Anna pursues her sister no matter where she may go, how dangerous she may be, or what it could mean for her own life. This type of love, is again, shown in a non-romantic relationship in this film. Though Kristoff is portrayed to be kind, gentle, and caring, there is simply no time to develop this level of commitment to Anna. The film shows how big of a factor a

continuous relationship is on creating true love. Though love can be chosen and lived out immediately, it takes a very pure-hearted person to do this. This amazing level of selflessness is seen through the character of Olaf. For the rest of people, though, it takes much time, effort, and patience to learn to truly love someone. This film depicts society's acceptance, once again, of the deep nature of love between members of a family, but does not truly develop this kind of love between partners.

Frozen displays how important it is to fight for the relationship with a sibling, Despicable Me 2 reiterates Despicable Me's theme of a father's love for and protection of his daughters, and Man of Steel depicts the respect and trust that must be built over time between a parent and child - all of these relationships are worth working at, fighting, and sacrificing for. Yet, romantic relationships and marriages are thrown away every day for far less than some of the conflicts within these families. If people were able to choose their parents, their siblings, and their children, would the same thing happen? Does the power to choose give people the idea that those relationships are replaceable?

Iron Man 3, the second highest grossing film, is the first to show a long-lasting monogamous relationship between two characters who are not married (IMDb, 2014). The film begins with a flashback to 1999 when Tony was clearly a womanizer, telling a man in the elevator that he will meet him in five minutes, "I'm just going to try to get my beef wet real quick if you know what I'm talkin' about," (Springfield, 2013). It is clear throughout the movie that sex does not come with any strings, and mentions one-night stands and prostitutes (IMDb, 2013). Since then, it is apparent that Tony has decided to

be in an exclusive relationship with Pepper. The movie has a plot of Iron Man needing to save the world from terrorists who desire to control the vice-president after killing the president. However, the president of Marvel Studios stated in an interview that the central conflict in the film is the love triangle between Pepper, Tony, and his obsession with his suits. He says,

Yes, there's a bad guy. Yes the stakes are very, very high... but the real stakes are, is Tony going to be able to set aside the obsession to spend all day, every day in that workshop, tinkering with the suits in order to focus on, as he says in the trailer, the one thing that matters most - Pepper. And that actually is what the entire movie's about, (Chitwood, 2013).

This love triangle plays out throughout the film, and when push comes to shove and Pepper's life is in danger, Tony has each of the suits destroyed as a sign of devotion to Pepper. He also undergoes surgery to remove the shrapnel embedded near his heart. Throwing the chest arc reactor into the sea, Tony muses that he will always be Iron Man.

In this film, love is again pushed to be extraordinary by extreme circumstances. Though Pepper is fed up with Tony and his obsession with the suits, it is not until all else is stripped away that Tony realizes what is truly important to him. Society builds love up to be grand and extravagant, heroic and daring. But where is couple who has been married thirty years, yet still goes on a date every Tuesday night? What about the lovers who buy their partner's favorite orange juice and cooks them breakfast for dinner, even after a stressful and tiring day at work? Why doesn't society triumph the couple

who makes it through the middle bits, the monotonous bits, the meaningful yet mostly forgotten bits? It is obvious that the partnership between Tony and Pepper is important and valuable - that it should be cherished - but it should be possible to express without life-threatening situations.

| includes references to: | yes/no | number/example |
|---|--------|---|
| uses the word "love" | YES | 3 - "I love you; I'm lucky" |
| being "in love"/ "falling" | NO | |
| length of relationship short or undefined | YES | the film starts with Tony's short-lived relationships, Maya talks about a one night stand, one location contains a harem of women |
| length of relationship assumed to be lifelong | YES | Tony is monogamous to Pepper and the connection is assumed to be lifelong, or as long as they want |
| body parts of a woman | YES | hands, face, eyes, heart - "she's going to need a cardiologist right away" |
| body parts of a man | YES | "try to get my beef wet real quick" |
| physical attractiveness | NO | |
| personality/character | YES | character's personalities are developed throughout the film |
| attaches value/deep connection to sex | NO | |
| talks about sex explicitly or implicitly for purposes of objectification - only personal gain | YES | one night stand, prostitute, several scenes of implied sex |
| loyalty/fidelity | YES | Tony and Pepper are monogamous, but not married |

| includes references to: | yes/no | number/example |
|---|--------|---|
| selflessness/sacrifice | YES | Tony has to decide whether he can give up spending all his time tinkering with the suit in order to give Pepper attention |
| dependency on other unhealthy - source of all happiness | NO | |
| dependency on other healthy | YES | |
| unity | NO | |
| work | YES | Tony must work to become the type of partner Pepper wants and needs |
| influence of alcohol/drugs | YES | Some drinking, drunkenness, and the main chemical compound |
| casual sex | YES | one night stand, prostitute, several scenes of implied sex |
| fate | NO | |
| trust/commitment | YES | Tony and Pepper must trust each other |
| bed/sheets | YES | "Come on, let's go to the bedroom" |
| tumultuous | YES | the relationship is a love triangle between Pepper, Tony, and the suits |

Figure 9. Analysis of Iron Man 3

Speaking of life-threatening situations, *The Hunger Games: Catching Fire*, the highest grossing movie of 2013, is full of them (IMDb, 2014). After challenging the Capitol and choosing to both die in the seventy-fourth Hunger Games, Katniss and Peeta are both declared the winners of a fight-to-the-death battle between twenty-four children between the ages of twelve and eighteen. President Snow suspects that it was not their "love" that caused the action, as they led everyone to believe, but defiance. He tells Katniss that she must convince the public and himself that it was out of love alone on her Victory Tour through all of the districts. She and Peeta decide they should become engaged to help with their image. Returning to her own district, Katniss meets up with Gale, whom she has feelings for but is unable to act on because of the

overwhelming pressures of the current circumstances. When public unrest results in Gale being whipped in the center of town, Katniss steps in to stop it, defying the Capitol's rule once again. Snow is afraid of the uprising this is causing, and attempts to end any question of the Capitol's authority by forcing the winning tributes back into the arena for the Quarter Quell. Katniss and Peeta each individually devote themselves to the survival of the other. After making alliances and battling out the conditions in the arena, Katniss, Peeta, and their allies figure out the system of the Games and the arena, and Katniss shoots an electrified arrow into the forcefield. The dome is destroyed, surveillance fails, and Katniss is airlifted out. When she awakens, Gale is by her side and Peeta has been taken by the Capitol; every promise she and her mentor made to save Peeta at all cost is broken and she is furious. After being sedated, Gale assures her that her family is safe, but that her district no longer exists.

Being the number one film, it is clear that the public champions the themes of this movie. The love triangle seen in Iron Man 3 appears again, but with all three parts being human this time. Gale represents feeling and may be what Katniss would like, but an idea which Katniss has no time or energy to spend on. All of her actions prove a sacrificial devotion to keeping Peeta alive. She knows that Peeta has the purest heart and intentions, so she fights not only for him but for the ideals he upholds. Meanwhile, he knows that she is the symbol of the rebellion occurring through the nation and that her survival is paramount to the revolution. Setting aside all of the political statements this movie makes, it shows that love is a choice. Though Katniss may have desired to

be with Gale, her choices and actions reflected a deeper, though not romantic, love for Peeta.

While Katniss has her flaws, her decisions uphold a view of love that creates a servant out of the self is to be praised. It places the needs of the other higher than the needs of the individual. Katniss risks everything for Peeta, even though she feel for him the way she feels for Gale; she does not rely on a feeling, she makes a choice. Though this film could make a wonderful statement about sacrificial love from these actions, society does not label it as such. It is loyalty, commitment, sacrifice, yes, but not love; surely there must be an emotional and romantic component to love, so this cannot be it. The sacrifice Katniss displays for her sister, volunteering to be tribute in her place, this can be love, but there cannot be love without romance.

| includes references to: | yes/no | number/example |
|---|---------|--|
| uses the word "love" | YES | 34 - "Do you love me?" |
| being "in love"/ "falling" | YES | 2 - "You're excited. You're in love. Big smiles..." |
| length of relationship short or undefined | Unknown | Undefined - Katniss prefers Gale but is willing to marry Peeta to stay alive |
| length of relationship assumed to be lifelong | Unknown | Katniss could be stuck with Peeta forever for political reasons |
| body parts of a woman | YES | eyes, hands, lips, face - often refers to holding hands |
| body parts of a man | YES | hands, eyes |
| physical attractiveness | YES | beautiful |
| personality/character | YES | personality of characters developed throughout the film |

| includes references to: | yes/no | number/example |
|---|--------|---|
| attaches value/deep connection to sex | NO | |
| talks about sex explicitly or implicitly for purposes of objectification - only personal gain | Mild | Finnick is told that contrary to his thoughts, the whole world does not want to sleep with him |
| loyalty/fidelity | YES | Katniss attempts to be loyal to both Gale and Peeta |
| selflessness/sacrifice | YES | There are many instances of sacrifice - both putting self in harm's way and giving up great desires. Katniss and Peeta both want the other to come out of the arena alive |
| dependency on other unhealthy - source of all happiness | Some | Katniss's mother seems to have had this dependency on her late husband |
| dependency on other healthy | YES | Katniss and Peeta protect each other, but remain individuals |
| unity | YES | Katniss and Peeta work as a team |
| work | YES | Katniss and Peeta's relationship requires much work |
| influence of alcohol/drugs | NO | Not for main relationship characters |
| casual sex | NO | |
| fate | NO | |
| trust/commitment | YES | Katniss, Peeta, and Gale must all trust one another to some extent. Commitment is for safety, not always fidelity |
| bed/sheets | NO | Katniss and Peeta sleep in each other's arms, but only for comfort - nothing sexual involved |
| tumultuous | YES | brought on both by outside situations and inner turmoil of the characters |

Figure 10. Analysis of The Hunger Games: Catching Fire

Through all of these films, society has spoken loud and clear: "Love your children, love your parents, love your siblings - you can not pick them, so you should love who you are stuck with. Girlfriends, boyfriends, spouses? They can change, they're replaceable. Please do try and save their life if they are in danger, but if they annoy you, don't worry about brushing them aside and getting a new version. Oh, and by the way, your love will never match your expectations, because we give you stories with backgrounds you will never experience - turmoil, danger, superpowers - and love in

stories like that is much better than anything normal.” There is a clear theme of sacrifice in all of these films, but only when it is absolutely necessary. In life and death situations, people should choose to be the hero, but in day to day life, society offers no reason to hold fast to a partner or spouse.

Love in the Bible

The Bible’s view of love is very different from what society makes it out to be. First and foremost, God loved the world (John 3:16). Before anyone deserved to be loved, God loved them, He provided for them, and He sacrificed greatly for them. The Bible commands people, therefore, to love each other in the same way. The most obvious relationship this love can be shown through is between a husband and wife. Marriage exists to give the world a picture of God’s love for mankind.

The Gospel: God’s Love for People

In the Bible, the greatest love story is not between humans. There is no person who was or is perfect, so it stands to reason that their love for another could not be perfect. Since the Bible states that God is perfect, it is logical to believe that His love is perfect also. This love story between God and His people is displayed through the sending and sacrifice of God’s son, Jesus Christ; this is the Gospel. This love that God has shown could never be contained or fully understood, for His love is greater than the understanding of the best minds. Therefore, only a few key points have been chosen to demonstrate the qualities of this love.

The most obvious quality in the love God displayed for mankind was sacrifice. To imagine a human father allowing his own son, though sinful, to be ridiculed, whipped, spat upon, and crucified to save someone else the father loved is hardly bearable to think of. When put in the perspective that Jesus had never sinned and that all of the people God loved were the cause of the cruel death of His son, it is almost incomprehensible. With all the power that could ever be, the power to wipe sinners from the face of the Earth, the power to start fresh, the power to create a people that served Him automatically, the power to save His son in the hour of His greatest need, God chose to put aside that power and fulfill the promises He had made through the prophets: there would be a new covenant for all, a way to the Father for anyone who desires Him. God chose the lost (Luke 19:10). He chose the murderers, the liars, the prideful, and the gluttonous over His son. God chose the greedy, the slothful, and the lustful. He even chose the unappreciative, too-smart-for-her-own-good, self-centered know-it-all author of this paper. The omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent God of the universe set aside His rights in order for the weak and ungrateful to have the opportunity to have life everlasting; that is sacrifice.

The second characteristic of love shown through the Gospel is loyalty. Through the death and resurrection of His son, there is a new covenant for all people: believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved (Acts 16:31). This covenant was foretold for centuries through the prophets (Isaiah 61:1-2, Psalm 2:7, Isaiah 7:14, etc.). At any point, God could have decided He was tired of the sinners; He could have turned His back and forgotten His people. Instead, through all of their spiritual adultery, God was

faithful. Psalm 36:5 says, “Your love, O LORD, reaches to the heavens, your faithfulness to the skies.” The love of God is faithful throughout generations and He will never leave or forsake His people (Deuteronomy 31:6).

The overarching feature of God’s love is that it is unconditional. People have done nothing to deserve the love God has for them. “But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us,” (Romans 5:8). There was no command from God, “Go, demonstrate your love for me by doing x, y, and z. Then and only then will I determine whether I will love you fully.” Isn’t this the way love today works though? People guard their hearts, build walls, and hold back. They do not give their love away freely, but only to those who have revealed over time that they deserve it. Praise and thanks be to God that He does not love this way, for no one would ever measure up (Romans 3:10-12). Michael McManus said, “Love is as much of a decision as it is a feeling. Love is commitment to someone regardless of circumstances.”

Love One Another

The perfect love God has for people should first and foremost be directed back towards Him. However, because God’s love is universal, He desires that people love each other as well (Mark 12:29-31). While still on Earth, it will be impossible for humans

to love each other perfectly, but there are many guidelines to aid in continually improving people's love for one another.

One of the most famous passages in the Bible dedicated to love is 1 Corinthians 13:

If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

An now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

This passage is filled with vast amounts of information that would take years to understand, much more to be able to put fully into practice. The middle section of the passage is most popular, yet gives great evidence to how unloving people truly are. Who, seeing a packed train approaching, does not inch forwards on the platform, assured that their purposes are more important than the rest? Who sees a friend receive a promotion and does not wish they were granted the same? Who, in this day and age, does not feel like smashing their fist into the computer screen when having to use a dial-up internet connection?

Matthew Henry's commentary on the description of love (written as charity) in verses four through seven give great insight into the response this passage should bring about in the heart of the Christian.

This love is a clear proof of regeneration, and is a touchstone of our professed faith in Christ. In this beautiful description of the nature and effects of love, it is meant to show the Corinthians that their conduct had, in many respects, been a contrast to it. Charity is an utter enemy to selfishness... Not that charity destroys all regard to ourselves,... but charity never seeks its own to the hurt of others, or to the neglect of others. It ever prefers the welfare of others to its private advantage. How excellent would Christianity appear to the world, if those who profess it were more under this Divine principle, and paid due regard to the command on which its blessed Author laid the chief stress! Let us ask

whether this Divine love dwells in our hearts. Has this principle guided us into becoming behavior to all men? Are we willing to lay aside selfish objects and aims? Here is a call to watchfulness, diligence, and prayer.

The hardest part of this passage to swallow is the portion that states, “[love] is not self-seeking.” Oh how this world is all about the self. In *The Screwtape Letters* by C.S. Lewis, the twenty-first letter is devoted to how humans continually believe that they possess what surrounds them. As a demon, Screwtape says,

We teach them not to notice the different senses of the possessive pronoun - the finely graded differences that run from “my boots” through “my dog”, “my servant”, “my wife”, “my father”, “my master”, and “my country”, to “my God”... we have taught men to say “my God” in a sense not really very different from “my boots”, meaning “the God on whom I have a claim for my distinguished services and whom I exploit from the pulpit - the God I have done a corner in”. And all the time the joke is that the word “Mine” in its fully possessive sense cannot be uttered by a human being about anything.

This passage from Lewis’s book displays not only the selfishness of humans, but the behavior that flows from believing to possess their own bodies and their own time. It is extremely hard for a person to love with this true humility, choosing another’s wishes over their own.

The very instincts of survival show the importance of preservation of the self. Using this universal characteristic of human nature as a backdrop, Jesus commands in Mark 12:31 to “love your neighbor as yourself”; stated in a different way, Luke 6:31

says, "Do to others as you would have them do to you." The concept of who is a "neighbor" is explained through the parable of the Good Samaritan, showing that everyone is one's neighbor. Though it may seem daunting to attempt to love everyone in this way, surely at least people love their partners and spouses this way, right? Unfortunately, this is not the case. Many, possibly even most, people look only to what they can gain through relationships, asking themselves the question, "Will this person make me happy?" Though standards for relationships are very important, personal happiness should not trump concern for the well-being of another. It is vital for the relationship that each person gives one hundred percent no matter what the other is giving. Directly after his command in Luke, Jesus asks, "If you love only those who love you, what credit is that to you?" It is easy for anyone to love those who are kind and generous to them - even the corrupt do this. Preparing warm tomato soup and grilled cheese when their partner has been grumpy all day being sick, relinquishing control of the remote even though they never receive the same courtesy, being gracious when an anniversary has been forgotten once again - these small and simple acts display the type of love God desires. When love is filled with grace, humility, and selflessness, God's love is truly reflected in His creation.

When two people can be assured that their partner will love them in this way, the fear that plagues so many in relationships can finally be lifted. 1 John 4: 18 states, "There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love." The rest of this chapter gives great context for the verse quoted; it speaks of loving others the way God has

loved. This amazing love of God was shown through the coming of Jesus, and should be mirrored through people's love for one another. By loving in this way, there is no need for fear. The terrible struggle of the one who cares most is lost in this type of relationship because both partners are able to fully trust the love of the other. No longer does one need to endure sleepless nights spent worrying if the other has been faithful, if their partner will abandon them, or if they have been good enough to deserve kindness from the other.

Marriage

In order to emulate the love God has for His people, a new covenant is made through the creation of a marriage. Old ways pass away and new life is created.

Quoting Genesis, Jesus says,

‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate. (Matthew 19:5-6)

Marriage is not simply a contract. Contracts can be broken or renegotiated; they are of the law. Webster defines a contract as a legal agreement between people or companies as opposed to a covenant being a formal and serious agreement or promise. When people stand up together and say “until death do us part”, they are pledging themselves to the other for the rest of their days. With this type of commitment, spouses can remain united in peace - without fear. This lifelong monogamy is a critical

part of the Biblical definition of marriage. Scientific studies have shown that “married people are happier, healthier, wealthier and live longer than their non-married counterparts,” (Andersen, 2004).

Another vital component of a Biblical marriage is sexual exclusivity. Hebrews 13:4 reads, “Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.” Once again, this aspect is a demonstration for the purity and faithfulness with which God loves His children. Douglas Farrow proposes that “where sexual intimacy is chosen, the faithful marriage of man and woman provides the only context in which that intimacy can be properly realized and fully expressed.” Only with exclusivity can spouses truly trust each other. This becomes especially apparent when a child enters the picture. Men are naturally devoted to the raising of their own children, not the children of another man. Though this may be overcome, God designed marriage in such a way that people would not have to deal with the pain and struggle that comes from infidelity. Sex is a very important part of marriage and was meant for marriage alone. The Bible describes sex as the joining of two people into one flesh. 1 Corinthians 6:18 specifically says, “Flee fornication,” which is defined as “illicit sexual intercourse, adultery, homosexuality, lesbianism, intercourse with animals etc.” by Strong’s Concordance. Sex outside of the covenant of marriage is dangerous not only physically, but more importantly for the person’s heart, whether they realize it or not. God created sex to be physically, emotionally, and spiritually intimate - it is a gift that is meant to consummate the marriage.

The extreme level of trust required for two people to rely fully on each other, so much so that they are one flesh, is designed by God to be much less difficult with the knowledge of each person's faithfulness to their marriage bed, both before and after the wedding. God is faithful to His people even before they know or accept His son; devotion to a future spouse should be likewise. In a study done on the factors that contribute to long-term marriages, it was found that the most common reasons for divorce included extramarital sex, while

Commitment to one's spouse and to marriage as an institution is one of the most important reported reasons for marital stability among both our happily and unhappily married respondents, (Lauer and Lauer, 1986).

Within this deeply committed relationship, God calls each to a specific role. Ephesians 5 says that people should seek to learn what pleases the Lord. Verses twenty-one through thirty-three lay this out for spouses, leaving no room to argue that this is not what God desires. The author, Paul, compares the marriage relationship, once again, to the love between Christ and the church. The husband is intended to be Christ to his wife in the relationship. The wife, therefore, is designated as the church. A husband must love his wife with the overwhelming love Christ showed for the church, even to the point of giving up his life for her. In the confidence of this love, the wife should have no fear of obeying God's call for wives to submit to their husbands as to the Lord. So many women read this passage and feel degraded or victimized; this seems an impossibility to them. However, is it not even harder for a man to attempt to love his wife as Christ loves the church? The woman is called, though she may fiercely desire to

be independent, to respect her husband's judgement. Meanwhile, the husband is called, though he may wish mightily to passively allow his wife to make the decisions for him, to seek wisdom so that he may make choices that will benefit them both.

When this type of marriage relationship occurs, it is the best possible environment for creating a family. This is not only a Biblical view, but is supported by scientific studies as well. "Statistics show that children raised by their own mothers and fathers in a married home do better than those who do not," Gallagher said. Anderson shows how these statistics are common knowledge, stating,

Even President Barack Obama refers to them as well known: 'We know the statistics - that children who grow up without a father are five times more likely to live in poverty and commit crime; nine times more likely to drop out of schools and twenty times more likely to end up in prison. They are more likely to have behavioral problems, or run away from home, or become teenage parents themselves.' Fathers matter, and marriage helps to connect fathers to mothers and children.

Both a father and a mother are needed to raise the most well-adjusted children. Just as men and women have different roles within the marriage, they also are complementary when it comes to parenting as well. In a letter to a young couple who had just married, Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote from his prison cell,

Marriage is more than your love for each other... in marriage you are a link in the chain of the generations, which God causes to come and to pass away to

his glory, and calls into his kingdom... in marriage you are placed at a post of responsibility towards the world and mankind.

Unfortunately, the ease of divorce has greatly weakened the family structure. It is clear throughout the Bible that God does not desire marriages to end in divorce. The Pharisees questioned Jesus, wanting to know why Moses gave a command to allow a man to give his wife a certificate of divorce. "Jesus replied, 'Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.'" (Matthew 19:8-9). Marriage is sacred and should not be entered into lightly. The faithfulness, mercy, and grace God extends to His people should be displayed for the rest of the world through how a husband and wife treat each other. Divorce not only separates a family, but mars the image Christians present to the world of who God is.

Discussion and Conclusion

The views of modern American society and those of the Bible are completely contrasting when it comes to love and marriage. The only point of small similarity is the idea of monogamy that is hanging on by a thread. Where the Bible calls for lifelong monogamy, society has decided to adopt serial monogamy, with no care for how long this lasts; it may be a few years or a few weeks. Even this principle, though, is being questioned. Today's culture asks why there should be any boundaries or guidelines in a relationship at all, except the ones the couple sets for themselves. Though it manifests

itself through the “pursuit of happiness”, the root of the issue is whether truth is absolute or relative. It is clear that the Bible declares itself to be absolute truth, but society has decided to rebel against this. “What’s right for you may not be right for me” is a common saying heard across the nation.

The absolute hardest concept within the Biblical definition of marriage for society to accept is that of sexual exclusivity. Though for many years certain things have been “taboo”, this is becoming progressively untrue. The clear evidence of this comes with both the lyrics and music video of the number one song in the nation over the course of the entire year, “Blurred Lines”. The main artist even stated publicly that they were *trying* to do everything that was taboo. Strangely enough, the things he mentioned specifically in this interview are some of the very things 1 Corinthians 6:18 tell Christians to flee. Compare the two statements: Robin Thicke said, “We tried to do everything that was taboo. Bestiality, drug injections, and everything that is completely derogatory towards women.” The lyrics speak directly of sex outside of marriage as well. 1 Corinthians 6:18 says “Flee fornication,” defined as “illicit sexual intercourse, adultery, homosexuality, lesbianism, intercourse with animals etc.” It seems to be no coincidence that the mainstream artist desired to show these specific actions. Much of mainstream music seems to reveal and present the harsh sides of love; it is an ever running roller-coaster with no escape but heartbreak, or one can chose to build walls around their heart and treat people like animals.

On the other hand, the films analyzed placed the romantic aspects of love on a pedestal built so high that there is room only for disappointment. The dramatic stories

and extraordinary characters give the public something to idealize, but it is an empty dream. There is no way a human being can match up to the big-screen personalities. To keep the viewers from being too aware of this fact, partners are set in relationships for undefined lengths of time; they are replaceable. Also, films often show the importance and goodness of family relationships to offset the theatrics of the love story. The Bible gives a perfect example of love, which is also unattainable while on Earth, but the gap between desire and reality does not create disappointment, but a thirst for heaven. There is sadness in a world of imperfection, yes, but the joy of knowing what is to come will far outweigh any temporary pain (2 Corinthians 4:17).

Commitment through marriage is the only solution to the problems in society's views on love and marriage. Sure, people can all not care, and become animals - that is one viable option. The other option is far greater - to can be loyal and steadfast in marriage - a covenant that should cast out fear of abandonment and the power struggle that ensues. Just as God has made an everlasting covenant with his people through the sending of his son, so should spouses make the same type of covenant with each other. Loving each other exclusively and sacrificially for a lifetime is the best way in which a couple can not only prosper in their relationship, but become a reflection to the world of the type of love God desperately wants to welcome them into.

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Lyrics

I Knew You Were Trouble
Taylor Swift

[Music video spoken part:]

I think--I think when it's all over,
 It just comes back in flashes, you know?
 It's like a kaleidoscope of memories.
 It just all comes back. But he never does.
 I think part of me knew the second I saw him that this would happen.
 It's not really anything he said or anything he did,
 It was the feeling that came along with it.
 And the crazy thing is I don't know if I'm ever gonna feel that way again.
 But I don't know if I should.
 I knew his world moved too fast and burned too bright.
 But I just thought, how can the devil be pulling you toward someone who looks so much
 like an angel when he smiles at you?
 Maybe he knew that when he saw me.
 I guess I just lost my balance.
 I think that the worst part of it all wasn't losing him.
 It was losing me.

Once upon a time a few mistakes ago
 I was in your sights, you got me alone
 You found me, you found me, you found me
 I guess you didn't care, and I guess I liked that
 And when I fell hard you took a step back
 Without me, without me, without me

And he's long gone when he's next to me
 And I realize the blame is on me

'Cause I knew you were trouble when you walked in
 So shame on me now
 Flew me to places I'd never been
 'Til you put me down, oh
 I knew you were trouble when you walked in
 So shame on me now
 Flew me to places I'd never been
 Now I'm lying on the cold hard ground
 Oh, oh, trouble, trouble, trouble
 Oh, oh, trouble, trouble, trouble

No apologies. He'll never see you cry,
 Pretends he doesn't know that he's the reason why.
 You're drowning, you're drowning, you're drowning.
 Now I heard you moved on from whispers on the street

A new notch in your belt is all I'll ever be
And now I see, now I see, now I see

He was long gone when he met me
And I realize the joke is on me, yeah!

I knew you were trouble when you walked in
So shame on me now
Flew me to places I'd never been
'Til you put me down, oh
I knew you were trouble when you walked in
So shame on me now
Flew me to places I'd never been
Now I'm lying on the cold hard ground
Oh, oh, trouble, trouble, trouble
Oh, oh, trouble, trouble, trouble

And the saddest fear comes creeping in
That you never loved me or her, or anyone, or anything, yeah

I knew you were trouble when you walked in
So shame on me now
Flew me to places I'd never been
'Til you put me down, oh
I knew you were trouble when you walked in (you were right there, you were right there)
So shame on me now
Flew me to places I'd never been
Now I'm lying on the cold hard ground
Oh, oh, trouble, trouble, trouble
Oh, oh, trouble, trouble, trouble

I knew you were trouble when you walked in
Trouble, trouble, trouble
I knew you were trouble when you walked in
Trouble, trouble, trouble

[Music video spoken part:]

I don't know if you know who you are until you lose who you are.

<http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/taylorswift/iknewyouweretrouble.html>

Just Give Me A Reason

Pink (feat. Nate Ruess)

Right from the start
You were a thief
You stole my heart
And I your willing victim
I let you see the parts of me
That weren't all that pretty
And with every touch you fixed them

Now you've been talking in your sleep, oh, oh
Things you never say to me, oh, oh
Tell me that you've had enough
Of our love, our love

Just give me a reason
Just a little bit's enough
Just a second we're not broken just bent
And we can learn to love again
It's in the stars
It's been written in the scars on our hearts
We're not broken just bent
And we can learn to love again

I'm sorry I don't understand
Where all of this is coming from
I thought that we were fine
(Oh, we had everything)
Your head is running wild again
My dear we still have everythin'
And it's all in your mind
(Yeah, but this is happenin')

You've been havin' real bad dreams, oh, oh
You used to lie so close to me, oh, oh
There's nothing more than empty sheets
Between our love, our love
Oh, our love, our love

Just give me a reason
Just a little bit's enough
Just a second we're not broken just bent
And we can learn to love again
I never stopped

You're still written in the scars on my heart
You're not broken just bent
And we can learn to love again

Oh, tear ducts and rust
I'll fix it for us
We're collecting dust
But our love's enough
You're holding it in
You're pouring a drink
No nothing is as bad as it seems
We'll come clean

Just give me a reason
Just a little bit's enough
Just a second we're not broken just bent
And we can learn to love again
It's in the stars
It's been written in the scars on our hearts
That we're not broken just bent
And we can learn to love again

Just give me a reason
Just a little bit's enough
Just a second we're not broken just bent
And we can learn to love again
It's in the stars
It's been written in the scars on our hearts
That we're not broken just bent
And we can learn to love again

Oh, we can learn to love again
Oh, we can learn to love again
Oh, oh, that we're not broken just bent
And we can learn to love again

<http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/pink/justgivemeareason.html>

Stay

Rihanna (feat. Mikky Ekko)

All along it was a fever
A cold sweat hot-headed believer
I threw my hands in the air, said, "Show me something,"
He said, "If you dare, come a little closer."

Round and around and around and around we go
Oh now, tell me now, tell me now, tell me now you know.

Not really sure how to feel about it.
Something in the way you move
Makes me feel like I can't live without you.
It takes me all the way.
I want you to stay

It's not much of a life you're living
It's not just something you take—it's given

Round and around and around and around we go
Oh now, tell me now, tell me now, tell me now you know.

Not really sure how to feel about it.
Something in the way you move
Makes me feel like I can't live without you.
It takes me all the way.
I want you to stay.

Ooh, ooh, ooh, the reason I hold on
Ooh, ooh, ooh, 'cause I need this hole gone
Funny you're the broken one but I'm the only one who needed saving
'Cause when you never see the light it's hard to know which one of us is caving.

Not really sure how to feel about it.
Something in the way you move
Makes me feel like I can't live without you.
It takes me all the way.
I want you to stay, stay.
I want you to stay, oh.

<http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/rihanna/stay.html>

When I Was Your Man
Bruno Mars

Same bed but it feels just a little bit bigger now
Our song on the radio but it don't sound the same
When our friends talk about you, all it does is just tear me down
'Cause my heart breaks a little when I hear your name

It all just sounds like ooooooh...
Mmm, too young, too dumb to realize
That I should've bought you flowers
And held your hand
Should've gave you all my hours
When I had the chance
Take you to every party
'Cause all you wanted to do was dance
Now my baby's dancing
But she's dancing with another man

My pride, my ego, my needs, and my selfish ways
Caused a good strong woman like you to walk out my life
Now I never, never get to clean up the mess I made, ohh...
And it haunts me every time I close my eyes

It all just sounds like ooooooh...
Mmm, too young, too dumb to realize
That I should've bought you flowers
And held your hand
Should've gave you all my hours
When I had the chance
Take you to every party
'Cause all you wanted to do was dance
Now my baby's dancing
But she's dancing with another man

Although it hurts
I'll be the first to say that I was wrong
Oh, I know I'm probably much too late
To try and apologize for my mistakes

But I just want you to know

I hope he buys you flowers

I hope he holds your hand

Give you all his hours

When he has the chance

Take you to every party

'Cause I remember how much you loved to dance

Do all the things I should have done

When I was your man

Do all the things I should have done

When I was your man

<http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/brunomars/wheniwasyourman.html>

Blurred Lines

Robin Thicke (feat. T.I. & Pharrell Williams)

[Intro: Pharrell]

Everybody get up

Everybody get up

Hey, hey, hey

Hey, hey, hey

Hey, hey, hey

[Verse 1: Robin Thicke]

If you can't hear what I'm trying to say

If you can't read from the same page

Maybe I'm going deaf,

Maybe I'm going blind

Maybe I'm out of my mind

[Pharrell:] Everybody get up

[Pre-chorus: Robin Thicke]

OK now he was close, tried to domesticate you

But you're an animal, baby, it's in your nature

Just let me liberate you

Hey, hey, hey

You don't need no papers

Hey, hey, hey

That man is not your maker

[Chorus: Robin Thicke]

And that's why I'm gon' take a good girl

I know you want it

I know you want it

I know you want it

You're a good girl

Can't let it get past me

You're far from plastic

Talk about getting blasted
I hate these blurred lines
I know you want it
I know you want it
I know you want it
But you're a good girl
The way you grab me
Must wanna get nasty
Go ahead, get at me
[Pharrell:] Everybody get up

[Verse 2: Robin Thicke]
What do they make dreams for
When you got them jeans on
What do we need steam for
You the hottest bitch in this place
I feel so lucky
Hey, hey, hey
You wanna hug me
Hey, hey, hey
What rhymes with hug me?
Hey, hey, hey

[Pre-chorus: Robin Thicke]
OK now he was close, tried to domesticate you
But you're an animal, baby it's in your nature
Just let me liberate you
Hey, hey, hey
You don't need no papers
Hey, hey, hey
That man is not your maker
Hey, hey, hey

[Chorus: Robin Thicke]
And that's why I'm gon' take a good girl
I know you want it
I know you want it
I know you want it
You're a good girl
Can't let it get past me
You're far from plastic
Talk about getting blasted
[Pharrell:] Everybody get up
I hate these blurred lines

I know you want it
I hate them lines
I know you want it
I hate them lines
I know you want it
But you're a good girl
The way you grab me
Must wanna get nasty
Go ahead, get at me

[Verse 3: T.I.]

One thing I ask of you
Let me be the one you back that ass to
Go, from Malibu, to Paris, boo
Yeah, I had a bitch, but she ain't bad as you
So hit me up when you pass through
I'll give you something big enough to tear your ass in two
Swag on, even when you dress casual
I mean it's almost unbearable
In a hundred years not dare, would I
Pull a Pharside let you pass me by
Nothing like your last guy, he too square for you
He don't smack that ass and pull your hair like that
So I just watch and wait for you to salute
But you didn't pick
Not many women can refuse this pimpin'
I'm a nice guy, but don't get it if you get with me

[Bridge: Robin Thicke]

Shake the vibe, get down, get up
Do it like it hurt, like it hurt
What you don't like work?

[Pre-chorus: Robin Thicke]

Baby can you breathe? I got this from Jamaica
It always works for me, Dakota to Decatur, uh huh
No more pretending
Hey, hey, hey
Cause now you winning
Hey, hey, hey
Here's our beginning

[Chorus: Robin Thicke]

I always wanted a good girl

(Pharrell: Everybody get up)
I know you want it
I know you want it
I know you want it
You're a good girl
Can't let it get past me
You're far from plastic
Talk about getting blasted
I hate these blurred lines
(Pharrell: Everybody get up)
I know you want it
I know you want it
I know you want it
But you're a good girl
The way you grab me
Must wanna get nasty
Go ahead, get at me

[Outro: Pharrell]
Everybody get up
Everybody get up
Hey, hey, hey
Hey, hey, hey
Hey, hey, hey

<http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/robinthicke/blurredlines.html>