A Case for Focused Marriage Preparation for Young People in the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

Abstract
The world is not hospitable to lifelong marriage. With a national divorce rate over 50%, divorce ends more marriages than death. Christian churches in America have recognized the fact and is trying to address it. Couples sign up for counseling, seminars, and retreats. And despite all the money spent to fix marriages, the divorce rate has remained level after decades of steady increase. Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) pastors recognize the same challenges. One avenue that has been underutilized is a preemptive approach. At the same time that young people are intensely preparing for college and for careers, the church can be intensely preparing them for marriage. Real preparation is more than simply giving young people the latest communication techniques or stress relieving habits, but it is developing and maturing their faith through Word and sacrament. Word and sacrament build up a faith confident of its status before God. A confident faith looks ahead to marriage as a way to live out its status. This project will do two things: 1) identify and refute the most malicious lies directed at single people and 2) suggest a few methods by which churches and ministers can intentionally combat those messages and supplant them with the messages of Scripture.

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The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) is a North American religious denomination belonging to the Lutheran tradition within Christianity. Characterized as theologically conservative, it was founded in 1850 in Wisconsin. As of 2005, it had a membership of over 398,000 in more than 1,200 congregations, in all 50 U.S. states as well as 24 countries. It is the third largest Lutheran denomination in the United States, following Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod (LCMS). As of 2017, it had a baptized membership of 363,997 in 1,275 congregations, with churches in 47 US states and 4 provinces of Canada.[1] It is the third largest Lutheran denomination in the United States. Role of women in the church – The LCMS and WELS agree that Scriptures reserve the pastoral office for men. In "This We Believe," published in 1999, WELS states that "women may participate in offices and activities of the public ministry except where that work involves authority over men (1 Timothy 2:11,12)." Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, conservative Lutheran church in the United States, formed in 1892 as a federation of three conservative synods of German background and then known as the General Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan and Other States. The Wisconsin Synod had been organized in 1850, and the Minnesota and Michigan synods in 1860. The Wisconsin Synod maintains a strict, conservative interpretation of Christian doctrine and the Lutheran confessions and will not cooperate with other Lutheran groups without absolute agreement in all matters of doctrine and practice.