

“Beyond the Honeymoon Stage“

Jeremiah 2:4-13

February 24, 2019

Usually when young people get married, they go on a honeymoon following the wedding – when Heather was planning to get married I remember being told by friends that Robin and I should be planning to go away on a holiday to rest – and when the newly weds return home, and show affection for each other in public, you will often hear people kid them, that they are still in their "honeymoon stage." I was curious if there was a definition, any information about those two words "honeymoon stage". I used the tool most frequently used today, *google*, and found that when I looked up 'honeymoon stage' this is what I read:

The **honeymoon period** tends to last anywhere between 6 months and a year. The relationship still feels fresh and exciting, and you're constantly learning new things about each other and having first experiences together. But there comes a point when suddenly you've done all that stuff together already.

The 'honeymoon' stage can apply not only to newlyweds but also to people who are just beginning to date. During this time of getting to know a person is a wonderful time of relationship building, when we try to present our very best selves to those whom we want to impress. Serious relational conflict is avoided. This phase is not always present in every relationship 100% of the time, but it is present often.

This "honeymoon stage" occurs in most relationships, between a married couple, a new class and its teacher, an employee and a new job, new friendships, a church and its new pastor, and others. We idealize each other and try to be perfectly what that other person idealizes, but we can only do it for so long, six months to two years being the norm and for some the 'honeymoon stage' can last for as long as seven years.

When the honeymoon comes to an end, as hard as we try, we begin to let our hair down and who we really are begins to shine through and is experienced sometimes with shock and hurt by the other person in the relationship. It is how any relationship handles this adjustment, the realization that the other is not the idealized "perfect" person we thought they were. That is the test of whether the relationship will grow and mature.

This "honeymoon stage" can even take place in our relationship with God.

In our scripture lesson today God is wondering aloud through Jeremiah, why the children of Israel have left him and gone after other gods. Is the honeymoon stage over in their relationship? God reminds the southern kingdom of Judah and the northern kingdom of Israel all they have gone through together: how God led them out of the land of Egypt where they were slaves, through the wilderness where they learned to trust and rely on God for everything from their safety to the water they drank and their daily meals of manna and quail, until they were finally ready to enter into the Promised Land. It was while in this land of plenty, in this Promised Land full of good things, that the people of Israel stopped following God and started following other gods who had no power whatsoever.

Maybe that was what they were drawn to, gods who would not require anything of them, gods who would let them behave however they wanted, who didn't care if they took advantage of the disadvantaged in their society; people like the widow, the

orphan, the foreigner, the poor and needy for their own greed, to line their own pockets. They did not want to be in relationship with a God who was going to challenge them to grow and mature in their faith. They'd prefer a wood puppet that they had made with their own hands that they could control and tell what to do, rather than a healthy mature loving relationship.

And it was not just the people who left God; it was also the priests and the rulers and the prophets who transgressed. Can you think of priests, rulers, or politicians of our day who have transgressed and not followed God in their public or private lives? People who are supposed to be leaders in our society who; rather than following God and God's teachings, would rather do only what is good for themselves rather than reach out and help others.

Why do we sometimes turn away from God? Why would we not want to go beyond that "honeymoon stage" to begin to really address the issues in our lives that need to be worked on, that need to be in-line with the love God wants so badly for us and for all of our relationships?

Amy Grant sings about a person who really does not want to grow in Christ. This is someone who is a baby in the faith, who does not want to grow out of the honeymoon stage and really face the things in his life that will enable him to grow into mature adulthood and a full relationship with his Lord and Savior. Maybe you heard this song by Amy Grant:

Show the video of Amy Grant singing *Fat Baby*

The song goes on to say, among other things, that the fat baby's daily devotions are stuck in the mud. And while his Bible is the "biggest King James you've ever seen," he will never grow in his faith.

We can be a fat little baby in our faith and try for as long as possible to stay in the "honeymoon stage" in our relationship with God and in our faith walk. Or we can begin to be honest about who we are in our walk with Jesus and the things we need to begin to work on to be in a closer walk with Jesus, in a more intimate and mature relationship that knows now bounds throughout all eternity. The choice is yours.