

God and Your Marriage



“So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.”

Matthew 19:6

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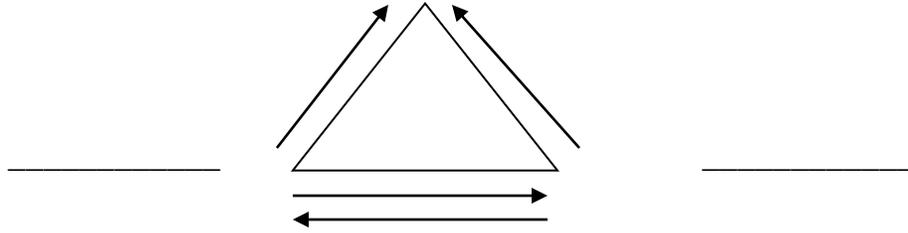
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Marriage: God's Foundation



What direction is your life going? Not your marriage, your life. You see, the direction of your marriage depends on the direction of your life. And the direction you are headed determines your destination. So the ultimate question becomes, "Where do you want to end up?" The destination you seek is determined by the direction you are headed and the decisions you make.

⇒ Where do you want to be in 5, 10, 20 even 50 years?

Proverbs 3:5-7 "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord, and turn away from evil."

God is not only the Path-maker but He is also the Path-way. Our lives must be pointed in His direction or our paths will end in the wrong destination. This is not only true individually but also relationally – specifically in this case for marriages. We cannot do life and relationships in our own understanding because we all fall short. We have shortcomings, oversights, and even failures. The biblical wording for this self-understanding is "sin."

"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" Romans 3:23

⇒ What stands in your way from trusting God's path for your life and marriage?

Your Role In Rebuilding Your Marriage

1. Believe that God can restore and rebuild your life and marriage. God is a God of hope and healing. In some sense, your marriage can actually become stronger than it originally was.

Genesis 50:20 *"[What was] intended to harm me, God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives."*

Psalms 46:1 *"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble."*

Romans 8:28-29 *"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son..."*

2. Trusting God's hope and plan, commit to honoring God and your spouse by repenting of known sin and obeying God's commands. Even if one spouse is uncommitted to honoring God, God wants to do a work in your life. You cannot change someone else, but you can work on changing your own heart and actions. So, commit to honoring God from this step forward.
3. Trusting God's strength and Word, commit to the investment of biblical counseling. This means time invested in your relationship with God and the Scriptures and time invested in communicating with your spouse and biblical counselor. These sessions will discuss "Marriage: God's Foundation", "Marriage: God's Refinement", and "Marriage: God's Blueprints." More discussion and sessions may be pursued.

HW:

- Am I committed to complete obedience to Jesus Christ?
- Write a "sin list" of sins you bring to your marriage. Be as specific and detailed as possible.
- Write a list of lies that your spouse may believe as well as that you may believe. We will talk about this from the context of John 8:42-47 and the Bible passages in the next session "Marriage: God's Refinement".
- Review the next session, "God's Refinement".

Marriage: God's Refinement

“What if God designed marriage to make us holy more than to make us happy? ... Behind virtually every case of marital dissatisfaction lies unrepented sin. Couples don't fall out of love so much as they fall out of repentance.” Gary Thomas, Sacred Marriage

⇒ Where is your marriage on this conflict scale?

Escape

Suicide

Flight



Denial

Engage

Discussion



Counseling

End

Fight/Assault

Murder

Read Philippians 2:1-11

How is unity, affection and sympathy achieved? (2:1-5)

- What is it like to be “you” in this marriage? Share your perspective with spouse.

Where does Jesus' humility lead? (2:8-9) What implications does this have for your marriage?

- Share your HW sin list and list of lies may be believed with each other. Compare and contrast with insights learned from one another.

Read James 4:1-10.

Where does conflict come from? (4:1)

- Beyond presenting problems, what seems to be the root issues for you and your marriage?

When needs are not met the progression of conflict becomes I Desire – I Demand – I Judge. We often have expectations for others to fulfill our desires which turn into punishment when they fail us. The spiritual reality is that these unfulfilled needs are really idols and God-substitutes. Remember, we are all sinners (Romans 3:23) which means conflict is inevitable. So, do not be afraid of conflict. When you expect conflict you are able to confront sin and bring it to the cross for reconciliation.

Read Ephesians 4:25-32.

How are we to biblically handle conflict? (4:25-31)

What is the ultimate motivation for forgiveness? (4:32)

ABC's of Conflict

Avoid sinful Anger

Benevolence

Compassion & Contrition

When most people talk of repentance & forgiveness they do not speak of it in the way the Bible does. An accurate definition of both repentance & forgiveness is required in your marriage.

Repentance is the turning away from wrong behavior. It contains hatred for sin and brokenness for personal actions. Psalms 32, 51; Joel 2:12-13; Luke 3:8; 2 Corinthians 7:10

Forgiveness is the pardoning (not accepting) of wrong behavior. It does not mean forgetting the wrong behavior but it will lead to freeing the other person from guilt and shame. The relationship has security but the intimacy needs rebuilt. Matthew 6:14-15, 18:21-35; Luke 15.

- Forgiveness removes eternal punishment on basis of grace not merit; eliminate entitlement mindset
 - Note: Often the temporal consequences remain, especially sexual sin 1Cor 6:18).

Confession Outline

(From Ken Sande, Peacemaking for Families: A Biblical Guide to Managing Conflict in Your Home)

Address everyone involved.

To whom do you need to confess?

Avoid “if, but, and maybe.”

What excuses or blaming do you need to avoid?

Four promises of forgiveness (Ken Sande)

- 1) I will not dwell on incident.
- 2) I will not use incident as a dig.
- 3) I will not dialogue with others about this incident.
- 4) I will not allow this incident divide us from seeking restoration.

Admit specifically.

What sins have you committed? What biblical principles have you violated against a holy God?

Apologize.

How might others feel as a result of your sin?

Accept the consequences.

What are the consequences of your sin? How can you help reverse the damage you have caused?

Alter your behavior.

What changes do you intend to make, with God’s help, in the way you think, speak, and behave? Results are immediate, verifiable, and unconditional.

Ask for forgiveness and allow time.

What might make the person whom you have wronged reluctant to forgive you? What can you do to make it easier for that person to forgive you?

HW:

- Read chapter 4 Confession (p.47-61) in Ken Sande’s book (purchase or attain copies from counselor)
- Write an “Application List” for what this session has taught you for life and your marriage.
 - o Restoration is a marathon not a sprint. It is a process of repairing something to its original or better condition. Learning to trust, warming up to affection & intimacy take time.
- Read Repentance and Forgiveness Scripture passages. How can these apply to your marriage and family life?
- Begin to review next session Marriage: God’s Blueprints

Marriage: God's Blueprints

Your marriage is an earthly relationship pointing to an eternal relationship.

The marriage relationship points to the relationship between Christ and the church (Eph 5:25-32, Isaiah 54:5, Revelation 19:7-9). Christ demonstrates his love for the Church in love through sacrificial death, and by nurturing the church through the Scriptures. Therefore, husbands and wives are to demonstrate the same unconditional love and nurturing character in their relationship. Even more, the permanency of marriage is valued above all.

What would you say is the purpose of marriage? Your beliefs about marriage point to beliefs about God's relationship with His bride – the Church.

Your marriage partner was chosen under the sovereign hand of God.

God is involved in the selection of a spouse (Gen 24; Prov 19:14), even when the relationship may be unequally spiritually yoked (1 Cor 7). However, God is not the author of sin (marital infidelity or union with unbeliever is against God's will as much as homosexuality is not God's design). The point is that God knew who you would marry before you did, so allow your marriage to grow in your love for each other as your love is shaped by God's love.

How would you describe your spouse to a stranger?

What expectations do you have for your spouse?

What qualities found in parents/family do you want to emulate? Avoid?

Your marriage is one of God's ways to bring about your spiritual growth.

Marriage is the union of two sinners under the sovereignty and grace of God. God joins people together for his sovereign purpose, more specifically, to bring about each person's spiritual growth. The marriage relationship is one of God's ways to bring this about (1 Cor 6:12-20; 1 Thess 4:1-8; Prov 27:6, 17). Ultimately, your earthly marriage is pre-Marital training for your heavenly marriage to Jesus Christ (Matt 22:1-14, 22:30, 25:1-13, Eph 5:32; also see #1 above). Therefore, when conflict occurs view it as an opportunity for spiritual growth towards God and your spouse (Rom 8:28-30).

What character qualities do you most/least admire about your spouse?

How do you normally handle conflict? (Confrontational, Passive)
What are some things that make you angry? How do you typically respond when angry?

Why do you think the words "I'm sorry" important in a lasting marriage?

Communication Tips

- Listen with your ears: "Mirroring" or repeating what is said. Ask questions and clarify content.
- Listen with your eyes: Body language and eye contact displays care and value.
- Speak with your hands: How you say something is as important as what you say.
- Speak with your heart: Be honest, sincere, loving and develop trust.
- Open issues: compromise
- Closed issues: confront

Your marriage is sustained by God's grace from faith in Christ and God's Word.

God's grace holds marriages together as two sinners seek to please God (Eph 2:8-10; Col 1:17; 2 Cor 5:9, 14-15). Both individuals must not depend on their own abilities or wisdom to satisfy the marriage but must depend on God and his Word (Ps 127:1; Matt 4:4; 1 Cor 3:11). You can do nothing apart from Jesus Christ (Jn 15:5).

What role will Scripture and prayer play in your marriage?

How can your church help support & strengthen your marriage?

Your marriage is designed by God with unique roles for each spouse.

"The husband and wife are of equal worth before God, since both are created in God's image. The marriage relationship models the way God relates to His people. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ. She, being in the image of God as is her husband and thus equal to him, has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation." – Quoted from the Baptist Faith & Message 2000 article XVIII (Eph 5:22-33; Col 3:18-19; 1 Pet 3:1-7; Titus 2:4-5).

Submission does not mean

- Lesser value or worth
- Husband is in place of Christ
- Wife gives up freedom or independent thought
- Wife gives up influence of husband or gives in to every demand/expectation

Husbands are designed to love profoundly and lead sacrificially & spiritually

Wives are designed to support ("helpmate"), submit (trust) and respect.

Submission does mean

- Trust, as Jesus submitted to Father or Sarah with Abraham
- Respect

Your marriage is God's designed outlet for sexual fulfillment and protection against sexual immorality.

God is the creator of sex as he has created everything. Sex can be a way to put the other spouse first in the marriage (Php 2:3-4; Mk 10:45). All forms of sexual fulfillment outside of your marriage are sin (1 Cor 6:18, 7:1-5). God desires marriages to be faithful just as he is faithful to the covenant he has with the church (Gen 2:24; 1 Cor 6:15-20; Eph 5:25-32). Sexual intimacy in marriage is for each spouse's protection against sin and immorality (1 Cor 7:1-5). Married couples should honor God and each other in their sexual intimacy.

Men are like Microwaves (event)

Women are like Ovens (experience)

Make a list of boundaries to "affair proof" your marriage. Share lists.

Relational Tips

- Attention with time; entries & exits
- Affirmation with word & deed
- Affection with touch
- Adventure with experiences
- Accordance with dreams, goals, purpose

Your marriage is God's primary foundation for procreation and raising children.

God's first words to mankind was to "be fruitful and multiply..." (Gen 1:28). Married couples, when able, should seek to follow this command to procreate because God seeks godly offspring (Mal 2:15). Children are to be viewed not as a burden but as a blessing of God (Ps 127:3-5). Those couples unable to bear children still have a complete marriage and are called to be fruitful in other areas of ministry (spiritual growth, role models, adoption, etc.). Furthermore, God uses fathers and mothers to rear children in the fear and admonition of the Lord (Deut 6:4-9; Prov 22:6; Eph 6:4). Fathers have the primary responsibility to train and nurture godly characteristics in their family life (Eph 5:26, 6:4; 1 Tim 3:4-5), as well as mothers are called to train the young women (Titus 2:3-5).

How do you think your children view your marriage?

What does your marriage communicate to your children?

How would you define your parenting style?
(active or reactive)

Who can be a resource for you in raising your children?

Parenting Tips

- Kids need both quality & quantity time with parents.
- Children are sinners. They must see they are part of the problem and need a Savior; just like you.
- Show God's grace by loving and forgiving them (and each other as parents). Stability and consistency are needed in establishing boundaries as well as consequences.
- Pray & read Scripture together.
- Utilize positive peer influence. This is one beauty of the church.

Your marriage is one of God's means for you and your spouse to practice biblical stewardship.

God expects his gifts to be used wisely (Matt 25:14-30). One gift is your marriage. God has given you a beautiful relationship, which is each spouse's responsibility to offer security and develop into a God honoring marriage. A second gift is family. God has given principles in the Bible by which you are to be a good steward in your family. A third gift is financial resources. Sources of income are from God and therefore, you should show thankfulness to God by honoring him with a tithe (Prov 3:9; 2 Cor 9:7). Everything you have is the Lord's (Ps 24:1) and you are to give him first place in every decision; and as you do you will see God's faithfulness (Matt 6:33).

What do you have in your life that is not a gift of God?

Are you both agreed on the way you spend money?

Your marriage relationship has the primary purpose of glorifying (pleasing) God in everything.

God commands every believer to prioritize their life based on worshiping him (Matt 6:33, 22:37; 1 Cor 10:31; 2 Cor 5:9, 14-15; Col 3:17). The marriage relationship is no different. Therefore, both spouses should seek to walk with God individually and jointly. This involves, and may not be limited to: weekly (if not daily) family devotion, faithful church involvement and stewardship practice, commitment to ministry toward fellow believers and being a Christ-like witness toward others.

If you were to die and stand before God, why should he let you into heaven?

What will be the driving goals and purposes for rebuilding your marriage?

HW:

- Review any photographs of your relationship (dating, wedding, family). Discuss significant moments in relationship together.
- Make a timeline of your relationship together. Include when you met, your firsts (date, kiss, engagement, wedding, children and other highlights).
- Go to at least one place that meant something to you both. Talk about your memories of that place and why it was important to you and how being there helped strengthen your relationship.
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Develop a “Growth-Rebuilding Plan”

What do you think is essential in rebuilding your marriage for the honor of God? Your plan must apply the teachings from Scripture and in your biblical counseling sessions. Your plan must be specific yet not legalistic (untrusting of God & other spouse). Supremely, include the gospel of confession, repentance, hope, forgiveness and faith in Jesus Christ.

Recommended Resources

Conflict & Communication

Eggerichs, Emerson. Cracking the Communication Code.

Eggerichs, Emerson. Love and Respect

Sande, Ken. Peacemaking for Families.

Thomas, Gary. Sacred Marriage: What if God designed marriage to make us holy more than to make us happy?

Husband & Wife Roles

Fitzpatrick, Elyse. Helper by Design.

Scott, Stuart. The Exemplary Husband.

Finances

Burkett, Larry. Debt-Free Living: How to Get Out of Debt & Stay Out.

Budgeting with Dave Ramsey found at http://www.daveramsey.com/media/pdf/fpu_qbudget.pdf

Sex

Akin, Daniel. God on Sex: The Creator's Ideas about Love, Intimacy and Marriage.

Smith, Robert. Biblical Principles of Sex

Wheat, Ed, and Gaye Wheat. Intended for Pleasure.

Parenting

Fitzpatrick, Elyse. Give Them Grace: Dazzling Your Kids With The Love Of Jesus

Greear, J.D. & Veronica. Ready To Launch: Jesus Centered Parenting In A Child Centered World

Kostenberger, Andreas & Margaret. Equipping For Life: A Guide For Parents

Thomas, Gary. Sacred Parenting: How Raising Children Shapes Our Souls

Tripp, Paul. Age of Opportunity: A Biblical Guide to Parenting Teens.

Tripp, Paul. Parenting: 14 Gospel Principles That Can Radically Change Your Families

Tripp, Tedd. Shepherding a Child's Heart.

<https://growinggodlygenerations.com/2015/02/07/christian-parenting-resources/>

Family Issues

Adams, Jay. Christian Living in the Home.

Rainey, Dennis and Barbara. Growing a Spiritually Strong Family.

Rainey, Dennis. Starting Your Marriage Right: What You Need to Know and Do in the Early Years to Make It Last A Lifetime.

Addictions

Powlison, David. Pornography: Slaying the Dragon

Welch, Ed. Addictions, A Banquet in the Grave: Finding Hope in the Power of the Gospel

Other Helps

www.fltoday.org

www.family.org

www.heritagebuilders.com

www.homeward.com