

What Kind of Relationship are We Supposed to Build?

Building Your Marriage--part 4

Nov. 8, 2015

We've looked at what marriage is, what the central threat to marriage is, and that love is something that must be built. This week, we'll look at what marriage is *for*.

DAY 1: Marriage as friendship

1. Genesis 1-2 describes God's creation of the earth. Seven different times God said, "*it was good.*" But notice what God says after Adam is created.

Gen. 2:18 "It is not good that the man should be alone"

2. In spite of Adam being in a perfect world and having a perfect relationship with God, something was still missing.

Genesis 2:18 The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

3. The English language does not have a good word for the Hebrew word translated as "helper." That makes it sound like God made an "assistant."

4. God's immediate solution was to create an "ezer" (Heb.) which means "helper-companion," or a corresponding human being which includes corresponding gender. The idea is two different and distinct halves that make a whole. What one has, the other is missing, and vice versa.

5. An ezer is an equal, a corresponding companion. At the most basic level, think of friendship. **Underline** some of the components of deep friendship.

Proverbs 17:17 A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.

Proverbs 18:24 A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

Proverbs 27:5 Better is open rebuke than hidden love. ⁶ Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses.

6. These kinds of friendships don't just happen. They are built.

DAY 2: Spouse as friend and lover

1 John 3:2-3 Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

1. With Christian friendship, what "cables" us together is Jesus Christ--knowing Him and making Him known.

2. In today's secular society, the top value in marriage is "passion," "romance," or "great sex." As we've seen in our series, these good things are totally inadequate on which to build a strong and enduring marriage.

3. Obviously those things are fun, but the core emphasis on marriage in the bible is a type of companionship that Jesus Christ provides for us.

John 15:9 "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.

¹⁰ If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love.

¹¹ I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

¹² My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.

¹³ Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.

¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command.

¹⁵ I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.

4. Jesus, as our example. He is both our Friend and Lover!

5. Before you yawn, consider the many alternatives upon which a couple *really* comes to marriage. Some come with strong "chemistry," physical appearance, financial security or a particular kind of lifestyle. Any of these can change over time, or in a heartbeat! None of them can pass the test of time.

6. A friendship-lover of corresponding gender can stand the test of time.

7. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 3: Becoming like Christ

Ephesians 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her

²⁶ *to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word,*

²⁷ *and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.*

1. Paul illustrates the roles we are to play in each other's lives as spouses, when he compares what Christ undertook on our behalf. He gave Himself, not just to get us to heaven some day, but that Jesus Christ might be formed more and more in us until we finally arrive in heaven.

2. The pattern is a "simple" one: I sacrifice myself for the sake of another. More specifically, I want to relate to my spouse in a way that helps them move toward God, and the desire to be more like Christ.

Eph. 5:26 ...to make her holy ...

3. This is very, very different than the, "What's in it for me?" approach to marriage!

4. Timothy Keller puts it like this. "I see who God is making you, and it excites me! I want to be part of that. I want to partner with you and God in the journey you are taking to His throne. And when we get there, I will look at your magnificence and say, 'I always knew you could be like this.' I got glimpses of it on earth, but now look at you!"

5. What strikes you from what Keller says?

6. What would happen if we could get a vision for our lives, as laying down our "rights," preferences, desires, wants, etc., for the sake of giving our spouse a picture of how much God is committed to them?!

7. When you get married, you do not marry a "finished product." You marry a block of granite of self. God sets out to chisel away, all your marriage on your spouse and on you. Sometimes He puts the chisel in your hands.

8. This perspective is crucial. It not only lifts your eyes above your own needs, but it should instill a tremendous dose of mutual mercy that is needed as both of you are being chiseled!

DAY 4: The top horizontal priority.

1. The world underestimates the necessity of friendship and companionship in a marriage. If you entered marriage with the primary reason of "chemistry", attraction, sexual relationship, financial security, or relational security, you'll find yourself restless in the pursuit of something outside your marriage to capture your soul.

2. When these things fade, the world offers you lots of options, such as, children, career, political activism, hobbies, sports, finances, etc. You will be looking to find joy and/or meaning in these more than your marriage.

3. Your marriage is headed toward the rocks. Your marriage will slowly suffocate if your spouse senses that he or she is not the first human priority in your life. This is where the friendship factor is so crucial.

Genesis 2:24 For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.

4. This was a shocking verse in the ancient world. Back then, the relationship with parents superseded every other relationship including marriage. In some cultures, it still does. Marriage needs to supersede all human relationships, and all human endeavors.

5. Marriages are not just derailed because of the usual suspects of alcohol, drugs, affairs, or porn. Many marriages start to slide in bad directions because of "good" things. Here are some common examples:

a. "She's all about the kids and their needs. My needs are an afterthought.. She may engage with me, but what gets her excited are the kids."

b. "His career is his real love. All I am is a maid, a mother, and an occasional mistress."

c. "We argue every holiday about where we're going to spend some vacation time. It's like we can never have a vacation without one set of parents being involved."

6. If you are married, how have you seen this in *your* priorities?

7. If you are not married, how have you seen this in others' marriages?

DAY 5: The gospel and marriage

1. In Ephesians 5, Paul interchanges the wonders of the gospel with the duties of marriage.
2. The more I understand the wonders of the gospel, the more I'll understand the role and value of marriage.
3. The gospel means a fresh start. It is the freedom we enjoy that we don't have to "have it all together." More so, we realize that we'll never have it all together, and yet the wonder of the gospel is that we are incredibly loved and delighted in, despite our failures!
4. The more you grasp this personal reality for yourself, the more it will make sense to relate to your spouse in the same way God relates to you. The value of your spouse is not just his/her strengths, or "having it all together." In marriage, there is the freedom to see each other's weaknesses, and by relating in mercy, empathy, acceptance, and grace, to treat your spouse the way Jesus treats you.
5. There is nothing more powerful in marriage than relating in this way.
6. In the deepest of ways, this defines intimacy. "I know my wife knows the worst about me, and is still for me." "I know my husband knows the worst about me, and is still for me."

Ephesians 5:28 In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.

Ephesians 5:31 "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh."

³² *This is a profound mystery--but I am talking about Christ and the church.*

³³ *However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.*

7. If you are living with the "What's in it for me?" model of marriage, good luck. You'll need it. The wonder of the gospel is what frees us to genuinely live to benefit someone else even if it means sacrifice to me.

8. Look back at the colored-in titles of each day's devotions. Which one strikes you the most as you think about marriage? Why?